



RAJAJI  
THE LONE VOICE.

*(1940-1947)*

## OTHER BOOKS:

1. Fourteen Months in Jail (1937)
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# RAJAJI THE LONE VOICE.

(1940-1947)

**PROF. N. S. VENGUSWAMY      M. A.**  
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I soon became absorbed in this book and read it at a sitting. Mr. Venguswamy's book is a very comprehensive account of the protracted negotiations between Great Britain and India—the old India—which led to the formation of the independent States of India and Pakistan. Mr. Venguswamy has obviously gone to a great deal of trouble to collect material—which he marshals very well—incidentally,—and to sift the evidence. He is singularly impartial and appears anxious throughout to do justice to all parties, not only the British, the Hindus and the Moslems but also the minority parties such as the Sikhs and Christian Indians. The book is competently written in an easy, authoritative style. It is well documented and one chapter leads easily into the next.

Trevor John Douglas  
President, The Penman Club  
Essex - England

## PREFACE

*Rajaji is an eagle among canaries. The little ones do chirp because they must but not with their native abandon for the shadow of the eagle falls on them*

Rajaji's is a name to conjure with. If there is any one in India who does not play to the gallery, he is Rajaji. He cherishes certain fundamental principles and is bold enough to fight for them and preserve them even against heavy odds. He has been for some years the one-man opposition to the Congress government at the Centre.

Throughout his life, he has been a bold champion of causes which he deems good and just. Even at the age of ninety two, he continues to be the most formidable force in the public life of the country.

Alone, Rajaji fought for a principle though the whole Congress including Gandhiji turned against him. In the words of Sri Jayaprakash Narain, "among the planets which made up the Gandhian solar system, only Rajaji shone brightest as a mental phenomenon."

"All our minds did not function critically in the presence of Mahatmaji. Rajaji's faith in Mahatmaji was tremendous but he never allowed his mind to slip away. Rajaji brought an extra-ordinarily keen and analytical mind to bear on every question that came before us" (Nehru)

"Rajaji is at least six months ahead of me", said Gandhiji and called him "his conscience-

keeper". He is a great social reformer, never afraid to act according to his belief. His political wisdom and integrity are beyond question. Rajaji is one of my old friends and was known to be the best exponent in word and deed of all I stand for. That in 1942, he differed from me, I know. All honour to him for the boldness with which he publicly avowed the difference".

In the year 1947, Gandhiji said, at Noakhali: "If only had I heeded Rajaji, I would not have to witness the terrible sights which came to pass during partition".

What is the secret of Rajaji's strength and wisdom? Lord Mountbatten answers the question thus "He has achieved strength through humility and wisdom and as such he is a rare and refreshing spirit:"

We are now on the way to democratic socialism which according to Rajaji is a strange goal for India. The substantive has shrunk into a mere qualifying word. Rajaji believes that it is his mission to restore the word to its rightful place. He has lighted his torch and those who are of his way of thinking have sworn to keep it burning.

When the pendulum swings far to one side, it usually swings at the first opportunity to the other extreme.

Every Demosthenes has his Aeschinus. We like our great men to come before us in couples and in our minds we can scarcely see them alone—Pitt without Fox, Gladstone without Disraeli, Nehru without Rajaji.



## INTRODUCTION

The student of Indian politics will note three well-marked stages in the history of our freedom movement.

The Indian National Congress at its inception was nothing more than an association of gentlemen of means and leisure, loyal to the government and with no loftier aim than that of thanking for old boons and asking for new ones in the offing. Every acknowledgment of gratitude was an expression of their lively sense of future favours. Even the most radical of our liberal politicians of the closing years of the last century dared not think of a free, independent India. To them, it was an article of faith that the destiny of India was ever bound up with that of England and that India should ever remain the brightest jewel in the British Crown.

As years passed, the tone and temper of the Congress changed. Hopes deferred indefinitely provoked even the most moderate of our politicians. Pious resolutions and moving appeals, still retained as a clever ruse, did not deceive the government which grew alert and watchful. Then came Bal Gangadhar Tilak who declared with the vehemence of a prophet that India's goal was freedom from foreign domination. Resurgent India found its voice in Tilak. Government unlearned its powers, sedition became popular, and the trek to prison started.

As if to save the country from utter disaster, Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene with his twin creeds of Ahimsa and Truth. Under his leadership, Congress developed into a truly national organisation. It gathered around it a halo of other-worldliness and politics became a way of life, the permanent occupation of millions of our countrymen. Gandhian politics was in essence a way of life which made every Indian a Congressman and every Congressman a hero and a martyr.

For long, the non-violent fight went on. The struggle seemed endless. Our lives were lit up with the fire of pain and they gave forth incense but like all incense it blended with the common air and left nothing tangible behind. Civil disobedience and long periods behind prison bars gave us heroes and martyrs but did not bring us anywhere near our goal.

The Simon Commission appointed by the British Government to consider the question of constitutional reforms in India was successfully boycotted by the Congress. After the publication of the report of the Commission, there were three Round Table Conferences in London. Gandhiji alone attended one of them. In spite of our suspicion and protest, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1934 which contemplated an Indian Federation with autonomous provinces.

Our faith in non-co-operation was as strong as ever. Our idealism would not brook any compromise and yet, there was the feeling that we must do something more than shout slogans, voice protests, and

meekly march to jail. Britain had not given us what we wanted but it had given us something which if used with tact and discretion might take us along the road to freedom. The idealists did indeed grumble but had grace enough to yield to the wishes of those who wanted to try the constitutional path. It was a leap in the dark but it was taken. The Congress contested the elections, won resounding victories, and came to power—after a good deal of negotiations between India and England and between the Congress and the Viceroy—in eight out of the eleven provinces. The Congress condescended to try provincial autonomy but disdained the Federal part of the constitution.

This constitutional phase beginning from 1937 was the theme of my book "Congress in office" published in Bombay in March 1940 with a Foreword from Sri Bhubhai Desai of revered memory. This short-lived glory was followed unexpectedly by the darkness that crept in with the coming of the war and the exit of the Congress from the constitutional scene in 1939. The Viceroy suspended indefinitely the Federal part of the constitution under the double pretext of the war and of the reluctance of the Congress to work it. Mr Jinnah the leader of the Muslim League had the satisfaction of seeing the Federal scheme which with all its weightage of separate electorates could offer his community very little political power, given a timely burial. Wrecking the federal scheme was the first step in the making of Pakistan.

Congress quitted places of power and took its position at the barricade. It was willing to strike

but afraid to wound. The government interested in nothing but the war-effort paid little heed to the demands and denunciations of the Congress. At this critical stage, Sri Rajagopalachari came out with his plan of a national government which after protracted discussion and with a good deal of hesitation was approved by the Congress High Command, but the Viceroy was in no mood to talk politics.

Now we pass on to the Japanese menace and the abortive Cripps' Mission. Rajaji's famous resolution in the Working Committee of the Congress, his advice to accept Cripps' proposals, and work the constitutional scheme with all its defects and his voluntary resignation from the Congress to propagate freely his views are given the respectful notice they deserve.

The "Quit India" resolution, instead of frightening the Government, led Congressmen into jail. Non-participation of the Congress in the war-effort did not materially affect the tenour and conclusion of the war.

Victory came to the Allies and Lord Wavell invited the leaders of the Congress to participate in what has come to be known as the Simla conference. From 1945 to 1947, Congress clung to the constitutional path. The failure of the Simla conference, the searching of hearts that followed, and the painful awareness of the fact that Mr. Jinnah was no Don Quixot tilting against the wind-mill, helped the leaders of the Congress to look upon politics as something real, prosaic and mundane.

When, after the war, the Labour party came to

power in England, Mr. Atlee, the Prime Minister and his colleagues told the Congress and the Muslim League that the responsibility to solve the Indian problem rested with Indians themselves. The Cabinet Missions's patient but futile endeavours to bring the League and the Congress together, the passing of the initiative from Indian to British hands, the award of the Cabinet Mission, the helpless interim government, the cruel and tragic happenings in Bengal and in the Punjab, the interminable wranglings over the Constituent Assembly, the fixing of the date of British withdrawal, and the final decision to divide and be free .....in short, all the stages of the last phase of our constitutional strivings are dealt with in the following pages in detail and without bias. We reached the end of the road but not of the road which we had chosen for ourselves, and not the end which we had sworn by for years.

History is not a science. It is an art. They say that a successful history can be written only by dint of imagination and imagination is subjective, personal. Dorothy Thompson once said to Churchill that history would place him among the world's great men but Mr. Churchill replied, "that will depend on who writes history".

Yes, it all depends on who writes *our* history.

The Author.

## RAJAJI FORMULA

"The Muslim League should endorse the Indian demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional interim government for the transitional period;

2. The Congress would agree, after the termination of the war, to the appointment of a commission for demarcating contiguous districts in the north-west and north-east of India where the Muslims were in absolute majority;

3. In the areas, thus demarcated, a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult franchise or some equivalent device would decide the issue of separation from India. If the majority decided in favour of forming a sovereign State separate from India, such decision would be given effect to;

4. In the event of separation, mutual agreement would be entered into for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications and other essential matters and finally, (5) these terms would be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility for the government of India ":

With Gandhiji's approval, Rajaji approached Jinnah.

## RAJAJI AND GANDHIJI.

There was far more in common between them on the human plane than the difference that had of late marked their respective approach to some of the political problems of the day. Rajaji had mortgaged his heart to Gandhiji even before he had met him, since the fame of the Mahatma's South African deeds had reached India and Gandhiji, the fisher of men- on his part had ever sworn that a richer haul than Rajaji had not come into his net.

## AN INTERLUDE.

Slogans and 'Sutras', satyagraha and martyrdom gave the national movement its thrills and its glory. Our lives were lit up with the fire of pain and they gave forth incense, but like all incense, it blended with the common air and left nothing tangible behind. Turning the other cheek had by long and endless iteration lost most of its pristine glory. Even within the hierarchy and in the ranks of the faithful, martyrdom was losing its original savour and fascination. "A charge in earnest, were it but a mill", ceased to be the slogan of those who looked around and found themselves face to face with a new and challenging situation. There was a swing towards constitutionalism, a reluctant straying into the path of realism and compromise. "Barricade life" for the time being gave way to the constitutional.

In the year 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act with the modest object of "associating Indians in the administration of the country" in a larger measure than before. The declared policy of the rulers of India was to take the country step by step towards self-government and in their view, the Act of 1935 was an honest fulfillment of this policy. They did not seem to gloat over it for they knew that even moderate Indian opinion was not enthusiastic about it, though a Royal Commission and three Round Table conferences had pressed it into shape. Britain at this time had the courage to force upon India a scheme of reform without waiting for the approval of the "different elements in India's national life". The scheme was, in essence, a gift to India, which was oddly enough, regarded by some as an unwanted gift which only stirred up our age-long and deep-rooted suspicion of the rulers.



The critics of the reform said that it was intended to delude the world with a specimen of Britain's sincerity and to strengthen the allegiance of those who fawned upon the British Crown for protection and patronage, but even the habitual apologists of the British Government were lukewarm in their praise of the Federal Scheme. It was indeed imperfectly shaped and reluctantly offered. The representatives of the people had very little power but the Princes who were unwilling to come out of their ancient world, who seemed to resist every change that was deemed conducive to progress, came in for special favour. They had greater representation in the Federal legislature than was warranted by their political importance and public spirit. They were indeed used as a kind of ballast for the ship which was obviously entering a stormy and unknown sea. The scheme was so manipulated that the federal part of it could function only with the sweet will of the Princes, and the Princes played their cards with remarkable dexterity. Conscious of the importance they derived from this novel constitutional experiment, they went on bargaining with the Governor-General for terms which would help them to strengthen their claims against the Paramount Power and their resistance to the urge for freedom and democracy of their own people. No wonder, the Indian National Congress looked upon the federation scheme as a political subterfuge to humiliate Indians and hoodwink Indian Nationalism.

Yet, it was not, as was looked upon then, an unmixed evil. The Congress with its eyes fixed upon immediate, unalloyed freedom, either did not discern this goodness or did not care to discern it. Had it been a little more tolerant in its attitude to the Princes, a little less theoretical in its notions of politics, and not too openly suspicious of the intentions of the government, the federal scheme would have taken shape and the cry for Pakistan would not

have rent the air. Both the Princes and the Congress played for comparatively small stakes and lost the one prize worth winning. Political enthusiasm, and even political idealism we had, but political foresight, the very necessary complement to them was not then much in evidence. The seed of Pakistan was sown when the Congress failed to get the federal scheme ushered in. With a little compromise, the Princes could have been won over. Co-operation in a common enterprise would have smoothed differences and brought about identity of interests between British India and Indian India, but this was not to be.

If the Congress looked upon the Princes as a set of political 'pariahs', the Viceroy went out of his way in wooing them and the more he wooed them, the more distant they became. The time the Viceroy lost in wooing them has been the undoing of India. Fortunately for him, the atmosphere was calm. In spite of their stern opposition to the Act, Congressmen decided to participate in the general elections which were to precede the inauguration of the reform. The franchise was wider than before, and Congress with its hold on the people was confident of triumphing over all other parties in the country, but the decision to fight the elections was taken only after a keen controversy. The idealists within the Congress opposed the reform tooth and nail but the realists argued that here was an opportunity for the Congress to show that it had the right to be the spokesman of the people. Not to exploit it would betray want of wisdom and statesmanship. Even if the Congress stood aloof, the elections would be held and "reactionaries" and "vested interests" would crowd the legislature and work the reform. Congressmen from the South who throughout the long history of this great organisation stood for realism in politics at last succeeded in veering the Congress towards constitutionalism. It plunged itself heart and soul into the elections. Lord Linlithgow took it as a good omen,

this straying of the Congress into the path of constitutionalism.

The elections were a challenge and a revelation; a challenge to the might of the government, and a revelation to all those who hugged the belief that Congress would not play the constitutional game. Yesmen, careerists, and opportunists who entered the field against the Congress were routed and driven to make an inglorious exit from the political arena. The Congress topped the polls in eight out of the eleven provinces of India and was the largest single party in the Central Assembly. The Indian people declared in unmistakable voice that they wanted a change of masters.

The disillusioned Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India found themselves in an unenviable plight, but they could not go against the provisions of the Act. The Governors had to call the leaders of the Congress in the eight legislatures to form the government. They did invite the leaders but the leaders refused to shoulder the burden of government in the absence of a definite assurance from the Governors. According to the Government of India Act of 1935, the Governors had enormous powers, reserved and discretionary, by the exercise of which they could convert the ministries into despicable puppets. The leaders wanted the assurance that the special and discretionary powers of the Governors would not be used to thwart their freedom and initiative. Neither the Governors nor the Governor-General could give this assurance asked for. A political deadlock followed. The King's government had to be carried on and the Governors appointed interim ministers from among those who were eager to rush in where angels feared to tread. In the meanwhile parleys went on between the Congress and the Governor-General and between the Governor-General and the India Office. The statutory period

for the convening of the Assemblies was about to expire and something had to be done to save the situation. The Governors at last climbed down and entered into a gentleman's agreement though oral, with the Congress leaders. In July 1937 Congress ministries were installed in the majority of the provinces of India.

There was jubilation every where. The prisons became empty and suffering and gloom were for the moment lifted. To most of us, this coming of Congress Raj seemed to be the very dawn of freedom. Non-co-operating Congressmen turned a new leaf and became the accredited upholders of law and order in eight big provinces of India. India seemed to be free. Swaraj was in action.

Provincial autonomy began with a "bang". The elite of the Congress became Chief Ministers of the provinces. In the election of the leader and in the choice of Ministers, there was none of the unwholesome jealousy and despicable intrigue which were to tarnish the fair name of the Congress of a later day. The task the Congress ministries had to perform was extremely difficult. They had to show, not merely their countrymen but also the world beyond that they could govern, and that they were capable of making dry-as-dust administration, something human, something which would stir the affection and pride of the people. The disciples of Mahatma Gandhi made the world understand that the dignity of an office depends not so much on its emoluments as upon the manner in which it is utilised for public good. Simplicity, the desire to identify the Congress with the common people who went without food and clothing, was the first note struck by Congress governments. A revolution was in the making in the thoughts and feelings of men and women who now began to walk and talk as if a new dignity had descended upon them. The administrative machinery imbibed the spirit and en-

ergy of those at the top and began moving with a speed and purpose which were indeed heartening

The Congress Ministries were conscious of their limitations but man is to some extent moulded by what he does. They relished their work and with boldness blended with caution strove hard to prove that provincial autonomy was something real and significant

Provincial autonomy stood justified by experience. It turned out to be neither "a snare" nor a "temptation", but a splendid opportunity for mutual understanding and sympathy. The white Governors and the dark Ministers worked in unison. They observed scrupulously the constitutional proprieties. We learnt for once that what is more necessary and more important than Acts of Parliament is the coming together of men of good-will, tolerance and sympathy.

In this thrilling adventure, Congress Ministries vied with one another. Retrenchment in the services, bringing down grades of salary, abandoning the summer exodus to the hills, were but a few of the means adopted to save resources for the nation building activities of the government. The bold idealism of Congress Ministries and the courage of their conviction were nowhere so clearly visible as in their prohibition policy. Congress regarded it as a sin to exploit the weakness of the people for the sake of revenue. It looked upon prohibition as an indispensable means of economic and social reform. Those were days when Congress politics had a stern moral background. There were indeed critics who found fault with the Puritan Congress governments for encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. Despite those who found that forbidden fruits had a savour of their own, this great social and economic experiment seemed well on its way to success.

Prohibition was a costly venture. It took away

a fair slice of the revenue and the governments had to exercise their ingenuity to discover new sources of revenue to make good the loss. The field of taxation open to them was limited and the imposition of a new tax was likely to injure the popularity of the government. It required ingenuity of a rare kind to hit upon a tax which would fall lightly and which would fall on all. The credit for discovering a tax of this kind which would raise the feeblest protest and would more than compensate the loss of revenue should go to the Chief Minister of Madras. The Sales Tax which has now become the mainstay of almost every State government was but one of Rajaji's gifts to the nation.

The administration of law and order was, perhaps, the strongest point of Congress governments. When some one complained against the arrest of a Socialist leader in Madras, the Chief Minister was said to have remarked that the business of the government is to govern. In Bombay, Sri K. M. Munshi, Home Minister, boldly tackled the communal frenzy which burst in the form of stabbing innocent passers-by in the streets and made himself immortal by sanctifying in the statute book the small but expressive word "goonda". In Madras temples were thrown open to Harijans, prison reform was accomplished, and a program for educational reform was outlined. In the South, the study of Hindi was introduced in the teeth of violent opposition. These Congress governments would have accomplished much had they been allowed to carry on without let or hindrance.

What promised to be the beginning of a brilliant chapter in the story of the Nation ended abruptly as a bright interlude. Events elsewhere had their repercussions on India and on the Congress organisation. In the rush of darkness from the West the glimmerings of dawn faded from sight and India was once again plunged in gloom.

## CONGRESS AND THE WAR.

The shadow that came from the West was the shadow of War.

When England was at war, the British Empire could not be out of it. This was perhaps the argument behind the Governor-General's declaration that India was belligerent. He did not deem it necessary or prudent to consult the Central Legislature before he issued his proclamation. The Government of India Act of 1935 had given the Central Legislature the right to determine whether "the government should be secured essential powers of direction and control over the provincial governments when an emergency due to war was proclaimed by the Governor-General. The section conferring this right was amended on September 3, 1937 by the British Parliament in such a way as to ignore the very existence of the Central legislature, and to empower the executive to take the appropriate decision. Perhaps, the Government in England and the Viceroy in India feared that they would be taking a leap in the dark if they cordesceded to consult the Indian legislature some members of which, Congressmen and Nationalists, were clamouring for absolute freedom. As Congress Ministries were in charge of the administration of the majority of the provinces, the Central legislature with a deep Congress tinge would naturally harass the Governor-General if not hamper him in determining the nature of the provincial executive. What guarantee was there that England's misfortune would not be regarded as India's opportunity? Obviously, the Governor-General had no discretion in the matter. Even if he had the discretion, it is doubtful if he would have exercised it, for the times were not propitious for such exercise.

The Viceroy's autocracy nettled the Congress. The Working Committee of the Congress considered the situation. After expressing sympathy for Poland, the first victim of Nazi aggression, the Committee stated "The people of India in the recent past faced grave risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic State in India and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate itself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her and such freedom as she possesses is taken away from her." The Committee did not take any decision regarding the future policy to be adopted by it, but asked the government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy, imperialism and the new world order envisaged and how these aims are going to be applied to India. It concluded thus "The real test of any declaration is its application in the present that will govern action to-day and give shape to the future"

The Governor-General betrayed no inordinate hurry in meeting the Congress demand but pursued his own ways to win the Indian people to the war. "Soon after the outbreak of the war, the Viceroy invited Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Jinnah to strengthen the home-front. He made certain proposals to set up a representative executive at the Centre. Mahatma Gandhi demanded the right to nominate all the members to the Council. To this the Viceroy would not agree nor would the fifty-two leading public men whom the Viceroy had consulted. Soon after this the Congress ministries resigned." "(J P Srivastava—in the Council of State)

The Congress would not forgive this snub which had all the marks of an insult. Retort was inevitable and it took the form of resignation of the Congress ministries. The Congress identified itself with the



nation, but the nation, if at all there was one, was not noble enough to learn by its example. The identification was not reciprocal.

This coming down from places of power and prestige was indeed spectacular. The Governor-General being obtuse, did not, perhaps, look upon this resignation as anything like a calamity. The situation resolved itself in his favour without any unpleasant initiative on his part. The places of Ministers were taken by Advisors. The King's government should go on and the war should be won. The Governors now bloomed forth in all the trappings of autocracy and geared up the administrative machinery to one single end—the war-effort. The legislators had an indefinite holiday. Congressmen chewed the cud of past achievements and passed new resolutions. Constitutionalism went out of fashion.

When the Congress ministries resigned in protest against the unhelpful attitude of the Government, there were ministries in other provinces which did not think it worthwhile to follow their example. One cannot assume that they stuck to their places because the government did not offend them or because they were anxious for the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini. In fact, they were interested neither in the fate of England nor of Germany but only in themselves. The Governors and the Services did not apparently frighten them. On the other hand, throughout the period of the war, the policy of the government was to leave the provincial ministries in the full and ample exercise of their authority. Some of them did indeed make a mess of their business, did indeed let loose hell on the populace, and yet the Gods of Simla did nothing but nod. They were so scrupulous in maintaining the forms of provincial autonomy that they welcomed Sir Mohammed Sadullah, the Muslim League stalwart, to save Assam from the odium of a Section 93 province. In spite of the Defence of India

Act, and the never-ending ordinances of the Governor-General, these provincial ministries managed to function with as much freedom and power as before the war. The Governors of non-Congress provinces observed as faithfully during the war the terms of the gentleman's agreement which Governors of Congress provinces observed before the war. In short, the war did not materially affect the prestige of the provincial ministries and in some provinces added to their power and usefulness. The ominous forbodings of the Congress High Command did not become real.

They say that the attitude of the Congress towards the war was determined not merely by its militant nationalism but also by its wide internationalism. It felt that only an independent India could make its influence felt in international affairs. England was the victim to Nazi aggression. Hitler was threatening the independent existence of the nations of Europe. To be true to its international ideal, Congress had to support England but unfortunately, England herself was an aggressor. British imperialism had enslaved India and to support that imperialism was to be a party to the perpetuation of India's own enslavement. Even before the war, Congress had been demanding that India should not be dragged into any war without the consent of her people. It had more than once declared its stern opposition to the despatch of Indian troops abroad for imperial purposes. In August 1939, before the war broke out, Congress Working Committee had declared that India should not be dragged into any war without the consent of her people. It had more than once declared its stern opposition to the despatch of Indian troops abroad for imperial purposes. In August 1939, before the war broke out, the Congress Working Committee had declared "The past policy of the British government as well as recent developments demonstrated abundantly that the Government does not stand for freedom and democracy and may at any time betray these ideals. India cannot as-

sociate herself with such a government or be asked to give her resources for democratic freedom which is denied to her and which is likely to be betrayed”

In the face of such irresistible logic, argument should be at an end and yet doubt flesh is heir to pops up and makes one ask if the Congress attitude to war was solely determined by considerations of mere ideology. If to help England was to perpetuate India's slavery, to deny help was to endanger the very cause of freedom and democracy. If the war would change the face of the world, it would certainly change the face of India as well, which was part of the world. There was the belief in the ranks of the Congress that without its co-operation and support the war effort would go awry but events alone could prove whether the belief was right or wrong. It seemed there were many in the country who did not share this belief of the Congress. They too loved their country but their patriotism did not prevent them from observing that the Congress attitude to war had in it a little of the taint of opportunism, of enlightened self interest.

Congressmen spared no pains to justify the step they had taken but there were others less vocal but not less patriotic than they who regarded it as a fatal blunder. When one remembers the terrible sufferings of the people during the war years, one is tempted to ask if the Congress was in the right in forsaking its post of duty and choosing the wilderness. When the dark clouds gather in the sky and the storm lours, the true shepherd thinks not of himself but of his flock. To leave the nation in the lurch in its hour of suffering and sorrow was unbecoming of a great organisation, the ostensible ideal of which was service of the people. The argument that Congress would not stoop to compromise could not hold water for Congress in office for two years was in essence a compromise. If Congressmen could run the government in normal times with a gentleman's assurance from the Governors, they could as well, in spite of changed circumstances,

continue the good work with the same assurance. The war would certainly complicate things, but even in the course of the war, the Governors would think many times (as they indeed did) before they pulled out their extraordinary powers to disturb the popular ministries. Those who proclaimed that they fought for freedom and democracy would be extremely guarded in encroaching upon the little freedom India enjoyed. The Congress should have viewed the situation in the spirit of give and take and utilised the power and prestige of its ministries to force the government to see things as it saw them. Government's reluctance to take the Congress into absolute confidence should have been viewed with a certain amount of tolerance and realism.

"If at the beginning of the war, we had shown foresight and the Congress ministries remained in office, and helped government, they would have secured the change of heart which in their parlance is more important than a change in the constitution of India. We would have succeeded as the frequent conferences Lord Linlithgow and more recently Lord Wavell have shown, in winning our liberties along with the war. At a critical time, when motives for joint action on the part of England and the factors and parties in India like the Princes and various communities and political organisations were the strongest, the Congress failed to take advantage of it to improve our solidarity by adopting courses which isolated it in the sight of Indians and in that of the democratic world beyond. Time and circumstance are more powerful than speeches. That is why I lament the way we missed the chance that the war gave us. Did it not result in the improvement of our industry? May it not have done the same by our politics and removed permanently the tragedy of the Indian situation? Is our frustration not due, not so much to Great Britain's attitude towards us as to the lack of clear consistent ideas in our leadership" (C R Reddy Utkal University Convocation Address 1945)

The resignation of the Congress ministries was a strong protest, but it woefully failed to make any impression on the government. Amery and Linlithgow, the props of the empire would make no declaration with reference to India's freedom. They believed that they could win the war against Hitler and at the same time keep the empire intact. They were in no mood to placate the Congress. They knew that in spite of its popularity, Congress could not do much to retard the war effort. They wanted men, money and materials and they were confident of getting them. The Congress was a national organisation but the Congress was not the nation. There were the loyal Indian Princes and the rich zemindars willing to make any sacrifice for England, and for the empire. The Defence of India Act gave the government ample power to control and commandeer all the resources of the country. The merchants and industrialists would think more of their profit than of anything else. With regard to men, the recruiting centres were always overcrowded. The poor in India would not let the opportunity of making a little money slip away unheeded. The Congress might say they were mercenary soldiers but it was enough for the government they were soldiers. The war effort went on smoothly. The Congress non co operated but the government knew that India co operated with it.

The Governors felt that if the Congress organisation was rendered impotent they would be able to control the whole of India with them. Without the least hesitation they began rounding up Congressmen. The prisons which had been empty for a while began getting filled once again. The situation was extremely delicate for the Congress and yet the High Command exercised considerable restraint. There was still the lingering hope that some way would be found for an honourable settlement. In the Ramgarh Congress (March 1940) it was decided that Civil Disobedience was the only course left to vindicate the honour of the nation but no date was fixed and no

announcement made for its commencement. Months passed and the war took a queer turn. Hitler invaded Norway, France collapsed, and the English had to make their heroic retreat from Dunkirk. Now England was the only country which faced the apparently invincible Nazi hordes. The courage and heroism displayed by the English in the darkest hour of their history evoked the admiration and sympathy of the Congress and for the time being all talk of civil disobedience was given up. Congress would not take advantage of the misfortune of England.

While Congressmen were wondering what they should do next, to compel the attention of the government, Sri Rajagopalachari sprang a surprise on his colleagues with a constitutional proposal for a national government. The proposal, very practicable and extremely modest, was that Britain should recognise Indian freedom, and ask the Viceroy to constitute a national government at the centre with the co-operation of the various parties. This meant that all parties were to sink their differences during the war. No constitutional change was contemplated but the purpose of such change was to be achieved through healthy conventions and agreements. The system of administration and its machinery would remain unchanged but every limb of the government was to be animated by a new spirit. This indeed was the best means of ensuring popular enthusiasm and co-operation in the war effort. The very moderation and foresight which were the distinguishing marks of the proposal rendered it obnoxious to many in the ranks of the Congress. The idealists would not be a party to anything which savoured of constitutionalism. Rajaji was vehemently criticised because it was felt that his proposal fell far short of the Congress demand. Yet, after a good deal of criticism, the proposal was accepted and was regarded as helpful in giving Congressmen an opportunity to identify themselves with the struggle against Hitler and Mussolini. When the Congress approved the proposal, the Vic-

eroy unceremoniously turned it down on the ground that Britain could not divest herself of the responsibilities which her long association with India had imposed on her. "His Majesty's government could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibility to any Indian government whose authority was directly questioned by 'large and powerful elements of the population'".

The large and powerful elements of the population which denied the authority of the Congress were the Mohammedans led by Jinnah, and the Scheduled Castes led by Dr Ambedkar. These two parties would never agree to be dominated by a government in which the Congress and its nominees would be in the majority. The suggested national government would in practice be a Congress dominated government. It must have been a shock to the Congress to be told that it could not force the government so long as "two large and powerful elements of the population" refused to acknowledge its national character. The Viceroy emphasised the difference between the Congress and these two communal organisations with motives which were purely political. In fact, the British government wanted Congress to understand that the political future of India depended not on the Congress alone but also "on the large and powerful elements of the population" which did not subscribe to its creeds and methods.

The rejection of Rajaji's proposal (August 1941) shocked the Congress but failed to open its eyes to the gravity of the political situation. It felt that independent of other parties and interests, it could alone, single-handed fight freedom's battles and win Swaraj for the country. Top leaders of the Congress felt that it was time to make the government understand that rebuff would not be taken tamely. Inaction, it was feared, would benumb the organisation. Civil disobedience was the only means by which Congress could vindicate itself before the people and bring home to the government that it was still alive.

and had a good deal of 'kick' It could easily start a country wide movement, but its magnanimity prevented it from taking advantage of Government's difficulties What the Congress did should be strong enough to impress the government but not so strong as to plunge the country in trouble and confusion It was at last decided that there should be only individual civil disobedience Those who had absolute faith in non violence and observed non violence in action were alone to participate in the movement Tests were applied and many were found wanting Those who took part in the movement broke some formal order of the government which they deemed objectionable and were arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment More than twenty thousand men and women, the elite of the Congress organisation, sought their way to jail Ex-Ministers, legislators, presidents and secretaries of local committees, broke some harmless rule or regulation of the government and were themselves rendered harmless The rank and file were left alone Some were arrested on mere suspicion and others for innocuous speeches and all were detained without trial

Congressmen were marched off to jail in October 1940 When they were released in December 1941, the war had taken an unexpected turn and assumed the proportions of a global conflict On December 7, 1941, Japan announced to a bewildered world a new theatre of war in the East with the famous Pearl Harbour incident It was indeed a wonder to Britain and America how Japan could have the temerity to challenge the might of two of the greatest powers of the world For years, Japan had been carrying on her 'China incident' Those who had been closing their eyes to the misery and humiliation of China were now compelled to open them to witness their own humiliation In their indifference to China's fate they failed to note the real intentions of Japan With one blow, she rendered the Pacific a Japanese lake Before June 1942 most of South East Asia had been



over-run by this puny eastern empire. There was not even a pretence of resistance in any of those places which were supposed to be invulnerable military bases of Britain. Singapore, Malaya, Hongkong, Indonesia and Burma fell one by one and from everywhere came the story of abject surrender. The victorious march of the Japanese was welcomed everywhere by the people as an event which heralded their freedom.

The empire seemed to be a house built on sand. When the storm and the rain came, it began crumbling away. The Americans were not a little shocked at the manner in which England was losing her resources and her reputation. Britain, on the other hand, kept a discreet silence over her disasters. While the British politicians talked of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms, they did not forget to make it clear that the Charter and the Freedoms would apply only to the countries west of Suez. Britain did not show any sign of repentance when the empire was slipping away from her hold. Only the finest jewel in the British Crown, India, remained to justify her imperial pretensions and even this jewel was being threatened by Japan, but England still hoped against hope. Japan's adventure cost England dearly but it gave her a friend. Here was the opportunity of winning the battles of the empire with the men and resources of America.

The news of Britain's military disasters in Malaya and Burma thrilled India. The unexpected and the unbelievable had happened. A small island empire had brought to bay two of the most powerful nations of the West. In the irresistible march of the Japanese army and the incredible surrender of the British forces, even the apathetic and fatalistic Indian discerned a ray of hope for himself.

The slow moving self confident government of India was careful not to betray itself. The viceroy

condescend to take the people of India into their confidence while determining their war strategy. To them India was a mere pawn in the game, though they trotted out in their propaganda sheets that India was with them. General Chiang Kai Shek who was familiar with the Indian political background was not easily deceived by this misleading propaganda. He wanted to be assured of the fact that India was behind the war-effort of the allies. Without the co-operation of India, there was no chance of protecting the western frontier of China.

The General and Madam Chiang Kai Shek visited India in February 1942. Japan was then dictating terms of surrender to British troops in Singapore. The object of the General's visit was to have a personal exchange of views with the members of the Government of India and with the leading men in India's public life..... in order to secure more effective united efforts against aggression.

Lord Linlithgow, it was alleged then, did not give the distinguished guest the warm welcome which he deserved. No less a person than Mr. Jayakar spoke of this visit thus: "I do not know if the stories of niggardly treatment given to the General are true. But it is certain that India did not give him the reception which free India would have given." The usual formalities of welcome were gone through. He was feasted and toasted, but in such a way as to make him and others feel that he was an unwanted guest.

All the political parties except the Muslim League gave him a warm welcome. The League, perhaps feared that the General had come to solve the Indian political deadlock in a manner which was detrimental to its interest. It sat on the fence and pretended to ignore the great leader as the cat pretends when it laps milk. Before leaving India, the General gave the people of this country the following message:"

## CRIPPS' MISSION

The war had become as much the concern of America as of Britain. Victory over Japan was the prime interest of the United States. On the other hand Britain was interested in securing the safety of her hearth and home and if possible her empire too. The leadership of the United Nations had fallen on the shoulders of the United States. America could talk about freedom and democracy without qualification and reserve because she had no empire. Britain still had an empire and she could not indulge in glorious promises of freedom to all and sundry. At the same time she could not remain absolutely indifferent to public opinion in America and in the suppressed countries of the world. When an American paper wrote that India would not fight for any kind of empire personified by Mr. Amrey and that they (Americans) gloomily saw a major disaster ahead of the United Nations, Mr. Churchill could not assume a pose of undisturbed indifference. The appeal which the great leader of China made to Britain had its own significance. The British Labour Party, some prominent members of which were in the Cabinet, issued a statement that it was the duty of the government to take every possible step to promote Indian agreement. There was pressure from every side and above all, there was the imminent threat of invasion of India by Japan. The British government at last decided to do something to help the transfer of power from Britain to India.

In her dealings with India, Britain had a way which made it appear that India was in the wrong. She invariably succeeded in making the world understand that she was willing to transfer power, but found it impossible to do so. She tried to prove to the world that if India was not free, it was not Britain's fault, but India's. The Japanese menace

was imminent, Congress was frowning, and the Americans were critical. Something had to be done to placate the world and put India in the wrong. The Under Secretary of State for India observed in parliament "The difficulty in India was not with regard to transference of power by the British government but what Indian government or governments were to take over the administration from Britain. The Muslims and the Hindu community do not want the same thing and to think of them as a majority and a minority is to risk a serious error, for that line of thought will suggest that it is the duty of the minority to bow to the wishes of the majority. The minority has no more duty to bow to the wishes of the majority merely because it is a majority than the smaller peoples of Europe such as the Greeks had to bow to the wishes of the Germans merely because they were a minority." The argument of the noble Lord was in keeping with the great Tory tradition. It was indeed a dismal picture he painted, but not a false one altogether. The Under-Secretary was not merely stating the facts of the present but was also anticipating unconsciously the events of the future.

From the year 1937 the Muslims of India had a grievance and it was, in all conscience, a legitimate grievance. Separate electorates on which they had pinned their faith ceased to be an advantage when rule by majority became the fashion. Even in provinces where Muslims were in a majority, and where the Muslim League had considerable influence, it became impossible for them to form ministries and run the administration. The Hindu and Sikh minorities and some Muslim vested interests could easily combine against them and outnumber them in the legislature. This was easily possible because even where they formed the majority community, the difference between them and the minorities was but very small in numbers. In the Punjab, Muslims formed fifty per cent of the population and the Sikh,

Hindus and other minorities formed forty four per cent. In Bengal also the difference in strength between the majority and the minority was very small. Some kind of understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims outside the League was enough to deprive the League of its legitimate claim to exercise power. The Act of 1935 with provincial autonomy and federation disillusioned the League. Mr. Jinnah's aim at first was, in fact, limited to gaining for his community the right which belonged to it by virtue of its numbers. He did not want the Muslim community to be swamped by a combination of all other communities. This was the grievance of the League, not an imaginary grievance, but real. While the Congress wielded power, the Muslim League had to stand by, sulking. Federation and provincial autonomy as contemplated in the Act of 1935 did not satisfy the political aspirations of the Muslims. No wonder, they began calling themselves a separate nation and demanding the division of India. The only way by which Muslim fears could have been allayed was to share with them political power. The Congress was not prepared to yield on this point. By dubbing the League a communal organisation, Congress made rapproachment impossible.

The Congress Working Committee met periodically, and surveyed the state of affairs of the nation. In 1941, when the Committee met at Bardoli, Congressmen were exhorted to remain at their posts and continue the service of the people avoiding conflicts with the authorities. It seemed the Committee was prepared to co-operate with the government if the government would meet it half-way. Gandhiji, however, declared that he would not be a party to violence of any kind and he expressed his desire to be relieved of his responsibilities as guide and Mentor of the Congress.

Congress position was reviewed at Wardha in

January 1942 and the determination to win independence was reasserted. The Committee allowed civil disobedience by individuals on condition that it did not affect adversely the war-efforts of the government. The eagerness of his followers to sacrifice his cherished non-violence, to cast away the "invaluable pearl", made Gandhiji extremely unhappy, but their determination to quarrel among themselves made him literally miserable. Referring to the Bombay resolution, he said that it was a mirror in which all groups could see themselves. The original was Jawaharlal's draft but it was referred to a sub committee at whose hands it underwent material changes. The original had left no room for Rajaji to work. "The Committee" opened a tiny window for him to squeeze in. Jawaharlal's opposition to the war-effort was as strong as his though Jawaharlal's reasons were different. Rajaji would participate if certain conditions acceptable to the Congress were fulfilled. Non-violent non-co operators like Rajendra Prasad had certainly a place, for until the remote event took place, nonviolence ruled supreme. Let there be no lack of understanding and zeal among Congressmen. Neither Jawaharlal nor Rajaji will let you remain idle"

Gandhiji was not the person to mince matters. He discerned a gulf yawning between Jawaharlal and Rajaji. The Bombay resolution was at best a compromise resolution, a mere patch-work to mollify the different sections in the Congress. The tiny window which it opened for Rajaji to squeeze in was too small for the purpose and Rajaji was not the person to squeeze in anywhere. Jawaharlal Nehru's opposition to the war effort was the idealist's opposition to any thing which threatened to compromise his ideal. Non violent non co operators were unwilling to co-operate because they felt co operation implied the transgression of the ethics of their sacred non violence. To them non violence was an end in itself. They were the men of faith in the party.

Rajaji, on the other hand, had a flair for things practical and practicable. While others used their faith or idealism, he used his sweet reasonableness. According to him, the situation in the country demanded not non-violent individual civil disobedience leading to futile martyrdom in jail, but an intelligent appreciation of facts, political and material and the willingness to adapt themselves to changed and changing circumstances. He had the gift of vision to penetrate the future and the gift of reason to relate present events to possible developments in the future. He believed that the Congress ought to participate in the war-effort, not in the interests of Britain but in the interests of India and her people. The co-operation he suggested was not the subservient co-operation of the slave or of the opportunist. It was not a compromise with the high ideals and exalted principles of the Congress. As a political organisation, the Congress was as much bound to pursue a reasonable and realistic policy as to hold aloft a noble ideal before the public. He was as much devoted to Gandhiji and his principles as any other Congressman was, but he was different from most of them because he would not surrender his conscience and conviction to an individual or to a party. The result was, he was looked upon as a rebel and had before long to leave the fold.

Criticism within the Congress and without was responsible for the relaxation of the principle of non-violence. The statement of the Working Committee that "the Congress would not take up the position that it would not participate in the present war on the ground of non-violence alone" was intended to mollify both the British government and the allies. Heartened by the Working Committee's statement, Lord Hailey observed in the House of Lords: "This is no time for *manouvring* or *standing on punctilio*. We should be as bold as we were in the case of Syria

in making our declaration”.

A bold declaration was indeed the need of the hour, but if the declaration had no other virtue than boldness, it would certainly defeat its purpose and render the Indian political scene noisy and turbulent. Any constitutional arrangement, if it were to succeed should have the support, not merely of the Congress but also of the League. Nineteen forty two was not 1937. In the interval of five years the communal Muslim League had developed into a virile political organisation with a definite programme and a clear-cut course of action. When Sri Rajagopalachari said, “What the Muslim League wants is a fair and just share in real power and no politician is interested in denying this”, he acknowledged the political importance of the League. Unfortunately, his statement caused an uproar in the ranks of the Congress and the Mahasabha. On the other hand, Mr. Jinnah appreciated the gesture and asked Rajaji to define some basis, some common ground for co-operation. “Regarding the August proposal, the principle of which we have accepted, our position is this, that we are willing provided we get a real share not only in the authority of the government of the Centre but in all the provinces. If Mr. Rajagopalachari will get the authority and sanction of the Congress which he has not at present, and define some basis, some common ground, and then finds the Muslim League taking an impossible attitude, then it may lie in his mouth to accuse us”. This common ground, however, did not exist as far as the Mahasabha and the Congress were concerned. The British government could not repeat the language of either the Congress or of the Mahasabha and hence it had to exercise its ingenuity in evolving a scheme which would have the approval of “the conflicting elements in India’s national life”.

The Act of 1935 with provincial autonomy and



Federation disillusioned the League. Jinnah's aim then was in fact limited to gaining for his community the right which belonged to it by virtue of its population. He did not want the Muslim community to be swamped by a combination of all other communities. This was the grievance of the League, not an imaginary grievance but real. While the Congress, the Sikhs and the Hindus wielded power, the Muslim League had to stand by, sulking. It felt that Federation and provincial autonomy as contemplated in the Act of 1935 did not meet the political aspirations of the Muslims.

The Japanese menace was real and imminent, Congress was frowning, and the Americans were critical. The appeal which the great leader of China made to Britain had its own significance. The American President showed his interest in India by sending his personal representative to this country. The Labour Party, some members of which were in the British government exerted pressure on it to take every possible step to placate India and to placate the world, but how to do it was an apparently insoluble problem.

Early in March, Prime Minister Churchill made the following statement in the House of Commons:

"Sir Stafford Cripps is proceeding to India on a special mission. The official purpose of Sir Stafford's visit to India is to seek assent to the proposals which the British government have agreed on to meet the Indian situation. Sir Stafford will take the British government's constitutional proposals with a view to securing agreement. He will consult with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief on the military situation".

Sir Stafford Cripps reached India on March 22 and in a broadcast placed the War Cabinet's proposals before the Indian public.

Cripps showed Mahatma Gandhi a copy of the proposals and Gandhiji's reaction was ominous. He advised Sir Stafford to return the way he had come.

### CRIPPS' PROPOSALS.

His Majesty's Government having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfillment of the promises made in regard to the future of India have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any respect of its domestic or external affairs.

His Majesty's Government, therefore, make the following declaration:—

Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India in the manner described herein-after, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India. Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.

His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides.

Complete transfer of responsibility with non-

acceding States, should they so desire. His Majesty's government will be prepared to agree to a new constitution giving the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analagous to that here laid down.

The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's government and the constitution-making body. The treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands and will make provision in accordance with the undertaking given by His Majesys's government for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide its future relationship to other members of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty agreements as far as this may be required in the new constitution.

The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities.

Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the lower houses of provincial legislatures shall, as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the numer of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total popu-

lation as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members.

During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war-effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India. His Majesty's government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the powerfull sections of the Indian people to the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth, and of the United Nations. Thus, they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

After formulating these proposals, Sir Stafford commented upon them and appealed to the Indian people to accept them.

"India will be free. How the parts will adjust themselves is a matter left to them".

"We hope and expect to see the Indian Union strong and united because it is founded upon the consent of all its peoples, but it is not for us, Britishers, to dictate to you, the Indian peoples. So we provide the means and the road by which you can attain that form of the absolute and united self-government that you desire at the earliest possible moment. In the past, we have waited for the different Indian communities to come to a common decision as to how a new constitution for a self-governing India should be framed and because there has been no agreement amongst the Indian leaders, the British government

have been accused by some of using this fact to delay the granting of the freedom to India. We are now giving the lead that has been asked for and it is in the hands of Indians and Indians only whether they will accept that lead and so attain their own freedom. If they fail to accept this opportunity, the responsibility for that failure must rest with them .. .. We ask you to accept this fulfillment of our pledges in the past and it is that request that I have put before your leaders in the document which you have now seen. I am confident that nothing further or more complete could be done towards the immediate realisation of the just claims and demands of the Indian peoples. Our proposals are definite and precise. If they are to be rejected by the leaders of Indian opinion, there would be neither the time nor the opportunity to reconsider this matter until after the war and it will be a bitter blow to the friends of India all over the world."

"There will still be difficulties, perhaps—the result of the distrust which has grown up between us in the past years, but I ask you to turn your back on the past, to accept our hand, our hand of friendship and trust and allow us to join with you for the time-being in working to establish and complete your freedom and your self government. This, as you may know, has long been a cause dear to my heart and it is with the greatest hopes that I look to the events of the next few days which may, if wisely handled seal for ever your freedom and our friendship. Let the dead past bury its dead and let us march together side by side through the night of high endeavour and courage to the already waking dawn of a new world of liberty for all the peoples."

The Congress Working Committee was in session from the 20th of March. It did not take the Committee a long time to arrive at a decision on these proposals. They passed a resolution as early as the

third of April and forwarded it to Sir Stafford Cripps. He requested the Committee not to release their resolution to the Press, and entered into a protracted correspondence with the President of the Congress. Nothing tangible came out of the correspondence and the resolution was released to the Press on April, 11.

“The British War Cabinet’s proposals relate principally to the future upon the cessation of hostilities. The Committee recognise self-determination is accepted in principle in the uncertain future but regret that it is fettered and circumscribed by certain provisions which have been introduced. These provisions imperil the development of a free and united nation and the establishment of a democratic State. The Committee recognise that future independence may be implicit in the proposals but the accompanying provisions and restrictions are such that real freedom may well become an illusion. Ignoring the ninety million people of the Indian States is a negation of democracy and self-determination. The people of the Indian States have no voice in choosing their representatives. The States may become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails and where the possibility of maintaining foreign armed forces has been stated to be a likely contingency and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the States as well as the rest of India.”

“The acceptance before-hand of the novel principle of non accession of a province is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate growing trouble in the provinces and which may well lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves in the Indian Union. The Congress has been wedded to Indian freedom and unity and any break in the unity, especially, in the modern world when

peoples' minds inevitably think in terms of even larger federations, would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly painful to contemplate. Nevertheless, the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in the Indian Union against their declared will. While recognising this principle, the Committee feel that every effort should be made to create conditions which would help the different units in developing a common and co-operative national life. The acceptance of this principle inevitably involves that no change should be made which results in fresh problems being created and compulsion being exercised on other substantial groups within that area. Each territorial unit should have the fullest possible autonomy within the Union, consistent with a strong national State. The proposal now made on the part of the British War Cabinet encourages and will lead to separation at the very inception of the Union and thus create friction just when the utmost co-operation and goodwill are most needed. This proposal has been presumably made to meet a communal demand but will have other consequences also and lead reactionary and obscurantist groups among different communities to create trouble and divert public attention from the vital issues before the country."

The Congress President's last letter to Sir Stafford Cripps on April 10 throws a little new light on the protracted discussions and helps us to understand the real cause of their failure. Referring to the Defence Formula, the President wrote, "In the course of our talks, many other matters were also cleared up, unfortunately, to our disadvantage. You had referred both privately and in the course of public statements to a national government, and a "cabinet" consisting of ministers. These words have a certain significance and we had imagined that the new government would function with full powers as a cabinet with the Viceroy as a constitutional head.

But the new picture that you placed before us was really not very different from the old, the difference being one of degree, not of kind. The new government would neither be called, except vaguely, nor it would function as a national government. It would just be the Viceroy and his Executive Council, with the Viceroy having all his old powers. We did not ask for any legal change but we did ask for assurances and conventions which would indicate that the new government would function as a free government the members of which act as members of a cabinet in a constitutional government. In regard to the conduct of the war and connected activities, the Commander-in-Chief would have freedom and he would act as War Minister. Then he referred to resignation in case of difference with the Viceroy. "That sanction or remedy is always open but it is curious that we should base our approach to a new government on the possibility of conflict and resignation at the very outset." After pointing out that the continuance of the India Office is undesirable, the President concluded with the observation that "a national government must be a cabinet government prepared to put aside all questions about the future."

On the 11th of April Cripps replied:-

"I will not deal with those points which are covered by the original resolution of your Committee which you sent me as they were clearly not the reason for your decision.

Nor need I go into the question of division of duties between the Defence Minister and the Commander-in-Chief, as War Minister, with which you deal at length. This division allotted to the Defence Minister all functions outside those actually connected with the General Headquarters, and Air Headquarters which are under the Commander-in-Chief as the Head of the fighting forces in India. In addition



to these functions in the narrow field of defence, it was suggested that all other portfolios relating to that subject, such as Home Department, internal order, Police and Refugees, Finance Department, all war finance in India, Communication Department—Railways, Roads, Transport, Supply Department—supplies for all forces and Munitions, Information and Broadcasting, propaganda and publicity, Civil Defence Department, A R P, and all forms of civil defence, Legislative Department, Regulations and Orders, Labour Department, Man power, administration of Indian personnel, etc., should be put in the hands of representative Indians as Members of the Executive Council

Nothing further could have been done by way of giving responsibility for defence services to representative Indians without jeopardising the immediate defence of India under the Commander-in-Chief. This defence, as you know, is a paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government while unity of command is essential in the interests of Allied help in India.

The real substance of your refusal to take part in a national government is that the form of government suggested is not such as would enable you to rally the Indian people as you desire "

"You make two suggestions. First, that the constitution might now be changed. In this respect, I would point out to you that you made the suggestion for the first time last night, nearly three weeks after you had received the proposals and I would further remark that every other representative with whom I discussed this view has accepted the practical impossibility of any such legislative change in the middle of a war and at such a moment as the present"

"Second, you suggest a truly national govern-

ment be formed which must be a cabinet government with full powers. Without constitutional changes of a most complicated character and on a very large scale, this would not be possible. Were such a system to be introduced by convention under the existing circumstances, the nominated cabinet (nominated presumably by the major political organisations) would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed, and would in fact, constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority."

"This suggestion would be rejected by all the minorities in India since it would subject all of them to a permanent and autocratic majority of the cabinet. Nor would it be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of those minorities".

"In a country such as India where communal divisions are still so deep, an irresponsible majority government of this kind is not possible. .. Apart from this, however, until such time as the Indian people frame their new constitution, His Majesty's Government must continue to carry out its duties to these large sections of the Indian people to whom it has given its pledges

"The proposals of His Majesty's Government are, as far as possible, short of a complete change in the constitution which is generally acknowledged as impracticable in the circumstances of today."

The Congress Working Committee was in session from the 29th of March and it passed a resolution on the third of April and forwarded it to Sir Stafford Cripps who entered into a protracted correspondence with the President of the Congress. Nothing tangible came out of the correspondence and the numerous interviews that were held in the course of a week and the resolution as originally passed was released to the

Press on April 11.

After analysing the proposals critically, the Working Committee came to the following conclusion "It is the present that counts and even proposals for the future are important only in so far as they affect the present. For the present, the British War Cabinet's proposals are vague and altogether incomplete and it would appear that no vital changes in the present structure are contemplated. It has been made clear that the defence of India in any event will remain under British control. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce the responsibility to a farce and a nullity and to make it clear that India is not going to be free in any way and her government is not going to function as a free and independent government during the War.. The Committee, therefore, are unable to accept the proposals put forward on behalf of the British War Cabinet".

Apart from the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Congress, we have no authentic information about what Congressmen generally thought of Cripps' proposals. We know, however, what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru thought about them. In his "Discovery of India" he writes with considerable feeling while analysing these proposals. Most probably, his views and feelings were shared by some at least of the members of the Working Committee. When one reads this part of the "Discovery" one cannot help feeling that the good in the proposals is altogether ignored and the evil magnified. The Muslim League's claim for separation did not necessarily mean the partition of India into many units. The claim of the League might be based on religion but being the claim of a numerous community, it had a definite political tinge. Most of the political demands of people anywhere in the world become political through extraneous causes—through causes

which are not political at all. When people clamour for linguistic provinces, we dare not dismiss the clamour as unreasonable on the ground that it is based on language which has nothing to do with politics. When large numbers of people think and feel alike, and put forth the claim for a certain right, it becomes an irresistible political claims. If one section of the population has its sentiments, other sections have also theirs. If Hindus have deep feelings and sentiments in regard to a united India, Muslims have feelings and sentiments equally deep and sincere in regard to Pakistan. It is true that Muslims were spread all over India but their demand was not for an infinite number of Pakistans but for one single state where they believed they formed the majority of the population. If a large community strong enough to stand by itself, refuses, even unreasonably, to co-operate with the rest of the people, compulsion and the threat of ostracism are not the means to bring it round. When the challenge came from the Muslim League, Congress did not take it seriously. If the demand was for an undefined partition of territory, it was the duty of the Congress to get the territory defined. The conception of a religious State may be mediaeval, but it was the conception of a community living in our midst and with whom we had to reckon. If millions of people think and feel alike, though wrongly and foolishly, and are prepared to defend their thoughts and feelings, they develop political power which in the face of opposition becomes increasingly aggressive. We asked for self determination and we were given it with a vengeance.

The other fear that some other sections of the population would put forth similar claims for separate States was in fact groundless. What other community in India could ask for a separate state? The Indian Christians, an enterprising and enlightened community forms a very small minority of the

population and are not in a majority any where to have a state of their own. So are the Parsis. The Sikhs in the Punjab were and are a strong minority and even after becoming part of the Indian Union, they clamoured for a state of their own and got it. The Scheduled Castes are Hindus and even if they had hearkened to Dr. Ambedkar and turned Buddhists, they could never become a majority anywhere in India. Thus, even if we attribute sinister motives to the War-Cabinet, the mischief they could do was very little indeed.

Then, there were the Indian States, about six hundred in number but most of them were so tiny that they could not have any independent existence at all. A few big States with sufficient resources and population there indeed were and their rulers were very proud of their power and ancestry. Most of them disliked political reforms. There was every possibility of some of them declaring themselves independent, but they could not possibly be independent. They were indeed shrewd enough to know that they could not carry on without the help and co-operation of the government of British India. Most of the States were surrounded by British Indian territory and they never could have an isolated existence. There were two other factors not recognised by extreme politicians which influenced the attitude of the Princes towards political questions affecting India in general. These Princes, though conservative and autocratic, felt in their heart of hearts that they themselves were slaves to the Paramount Power and the political department of the government of India. They were as eager as the people of British India to shake off their subservience but they could not raise their voice. They shared the traditions, aspirations, and feelings of the rest of the people of India and they could lay claim to a kind of patriotism which though not ebullient, was not flat. Even supposing they turned out to be friends of the British,

the harm they could do to the national cause was very little indeed. They had always to reckon with their subjects who had the moral and political support of the Congress. If British India became free, the States could not long remain relics of mediaeval autocracy. If hopes were dupes, fears could be liars. We were exaggerating the evils and belittling the virtues of the draft proposals.

In the Press Conference that followed the failure of the negotiations, Sir Stafford was more outspoken than in his correspondence with the Congress President. He said: "The essential need in India is for all the leaders of all the main parties and communities to come together in a single national government. A scheme that attracts some, repels others,— such as the Congress suggested, is of little value. Nor does the precise form matter so greatly. Inspiration and leadership are not to be found in forms and conventions; they will be demonstrated by combined purpose and unity of action..... No constitution and no convention will work unless those who lead the people will come together with a common determination to make it work. Had Congress leaders felt themselves able to join with other leaders who are willing, then indeed, a great work might have been accomplished."

"Of course, every individual and organisation would have liked the Draft Declaration to express his or their point of view, forgetting that if it did, it would invariably have been rejected by others."

"The War-Cabinet were thus in a position rather like an arbitrator who tries to arrange a fair compromise between conflicting points of view. They could not, however, without denying the very freedom they were offering, impose a form of government upon the Indian peoples which they did not themselves freely choose. But in all this spate of criticism, the vital parts of the document with which

all agree have never been mentioned Full and free self-government for India—that is the central theme”

The last words uttered by Sir Stafford Cripps had a ring of sincerity and what is more, of prophecy about them “This critical and unconstructive attitude is not the best way of arriving at a compromise, but compromise there must be if a strong and free India is to come into being Communities and parties in India will have to agree upon the method of framing their new constitution The discussions are over, they will slip back into history, and they will leave their impress, a good clear, healthy impress which will influence the future ”

Non-party leaders, Sapru and Jayakar, in their memorandum expressed the fear at the prospect of two federal Unions, *one rival and hostile to another*. In their opinion, more than one union was disastrous to the lasting interests of the country, to its integrity and security Most Indians shared their views but very few were prepared to accept the suggestions these wise and impartial leaders made to avert the catastrophe They said thus in their memorandum — “We attach importance to the possibility of leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities coming to some mutual agreement before the cessation of hostilities—an agreement which may secure and safeguard the interests of all minorities by providing for their representation in the legislature, in the government to be established, and reservation to them of the fullest liberty in matters of conscience, religion and culture If the contending parties began to work together in a common cause during the interim period, they will, we hope, learn to appreciate one another’s point of view and a spirit of tolerance and confidence may be generated conducive to a final settlement which will secure the position of the minorities in the fullest measure without causing a disruption of the well established integrity of the country ”

There was yet another wise but unpopular suggestion for the restoration of popular ministries in the provinces. "If, for the successful working of the provincial governments, it should be necessary to establish coalition governments, we would indeed welcome such an arrangement."

"We realise that the transfer of absolute control over defence at the present juncture, when it is necessary that there should be unity of direction and control of military policy, would not be in the best interests of England and India .. An Indian member in charge of defence willing to accept expert advice, working in close co operation and association with the war cabinet is needed to enthuse the Indian people "

League President Jinnah gave his reaction to the draft proposals in the course of his address at the annual session of the League held between the third and eighth of April. He explained the proposals and proved that the parts relating to secession of provinces were quite unsatisfactory. What is relevant to our purpose is the concluding part of the speech which bears full quotation. "I think I am echoing your feelings when I say that the entity and integrity of the Muslim Nation has not been expressly recognised. Any attempt to solve the problem of India by the process of evading the real issue and by over emphasising the territorial integrity of the provinces which are mere accidents of British policy and administrative decisions is fundamentally wrong. Muslim India will not be satisfied unless the right of national self-determination is unequivocally recognised. It must be realised that India never was a country or a nation. India's problem is international in this sub continent and differences cultural, social, political and economic are so fundamental that they cannot be covered up, concealed or composed, but must be handled by all as realists. The alleged power of the minority in the matter of secession suggested in the document is illu-



sory as Hindu India will dominate the decision in favour of one all-India Union in all the provinces and the Muslims in Bengal and the Punjab will be at the mercy of the Hindu minority in those provinces who will exert themselves to the fullest extent keeping Mussalmans tied to the chariot-wheel of Hindudom. Thus the Mussalmans will be doomed to subjection in all the provinces. We cannot barter away with our consent the future for the present, while fully realising the danger of foreign aggression and notwithstanding all our anxieties to defend India and to help the prosecution of the war. To do so will be a crime on our part to posterity and generations of hundred millions of Muslims of India to come."

"In conclusion, the committee wish to point out that the position of the Muslim League has been and is that unless the principle of Pakistan scheme as embodied in the Lahore resolution which is now the creed of the All-India Muslim League (the establishment of completely independent states formed by demarcation of geographically contiguous units into regions which shall be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, (the areas in which Mussalmans are numerically in a majority etc) and the right of Mussalmans to self-determination is conceded by means of a machinery which will reflect the true verdict of Muslim India, it is not possible for the Muslim League to accept any proposal or scheme regarding the future".

Cripps proposals were the war-cabinet's answer to the Indian national demand. They promised Indians freedom to frame their own constitution after the war and invited them to participate in the government during the war. It was for India to decide what kind of constitution they should make for themselves, whether India should be a single State or a number of States. When the war-council framed their proposals, they should have had in mind the

clamour of the Muslim League for a separate State. The principle of self determination which was the basis of India's claim for freedom was extended to the Muslim League and to all these who wanted to exercise it. It was said that the British government in offering their proposals were influenced by sinister motives, that they wanted to spite the Congress which claimed to speak for the whole of India. Whatever their motives, they could justify themselves by pointing at the facts of the Indian political situation. They did not even remotely suggest that any section of the population or any part of India should stand aloof from the Indian Union. What they did was nothing more than recognising the political rights of parts of India to determine their future. They only suggested that what was good for the whole was good for the parts as well. It was for Indians themselves to decide how they should adjust their differences. In fact, Cripps' proposals were a challenge to the Congress to justify its claim to speak for the whole of India, a challenge which the Congress did not condescend to accept. Any one who cares to compare these proposals with the Cabinet Mission's proposals of a later day will be struck with their similarity in essentials. The voice indeed was the voice of Jacob, but the hands were the hands of Esau.

Cripps' Mission failed because conditions in India were not favourable either to the offer or to the acceptance of immediate *de jure* freedom. Though every one in the country wanted freedom, some people wanted it in one way and others in a different way: Congress insisted upon the declaration of immediate, and undiluted freedom for a united India and the Muslim League with equal fervour asked for freedom and for a divided India. The Muslim League's claim may be mediaeval, unreasonable and unpatriotic but there it was to be reckoned with as a bitter political fact. If the British government handed over responsibility for the government of the

country to the Congress, the League would revolt and there would be a civil war. If the British recognised Pakistan, Congress would declare war. With Japan knocking at the gates of India, the British did not want a civil war in the country.

Congress disdained the first part of the plan but it was willing to give the second part a trial, provided the government contemplated therein was a national government, with full power and responsibility. It was prepared to leave in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief all the authority which he exercised over the armed forces and military operations. Yet, it felt that in the proposed national government there should be a Defence department in charge of an Indian member. Sir Stafford was willing to oblige, but the responsibility the Defence Member was to be entrusted with could not be easily settled. What was left after distribution among the other members of the government was precious little and was only remotely connected with defence. Canteens, petroleum, public relations, stationery, printing and social arrangements for foreign Missions were at last suggested as matters to be dealt with by the Defence Minister. This indeed was a merry list but the Congress frowned on it. Suddenly, a third party, believed to be Col Johnson, representative of President Roosevelt brought forth a new formula for defence. What this formula was and if it was accepted by Sir Stafford Cripps we have no means of knowing. We only know that Congress accepted the situation in a spirit of resignation. That this assumption was not unjustified is proved by what Sri Rajagopalachari said at Coimbatore. 'The statement that control over defence was denied in any circumstance represented the position when Cripps' negotiations started but at subsequent stages it became clear as a result of exchange of cables, the British government was prepared to modify the position and give us a part in defence also. The negotiations broke down over other points

and not over defeace” The President of the Congress contradicted the statement but the contradiction was only formal

Now we come to the national government From the day he landed in India, Cripps dangled before the political parties the very suggestive and flattering phrase, ‘national government’ It should have suggested many things to the Congress which perhaps believed that all subjects other than Defence would be placed under effective Indian control The Congress assumed that the Viceroy would function as the constitutional head of the government, and the “Ministers would function in the manner of a ‘cabinet’ Cripps, on the other hand, wisely kept his meaning to himself Did he mean a government which had absolute freedom or a government which represented “different elements in India’s national life ? ” The Executive Council of the Viceroy would continue as the Executive Council, but the members being representatives of communities and political parties who had the support of the people at large could, if there was understanding among them change it into a defacto cabinet with joint responsibility The Viceroy would enjoy his theoretical powers but would not go against the decision of his cabinet The truth was, the cabinet had to be formed by Indians What the Congress wanted was a cabinet from the by start granted and recognised by the Viceroy

Let us suppose the government agreed to a cabinet Would the Congress be able to take the Muslim League with them? Would the Muslims enter a cabinet with joint responsibility without knowing its implications for the future? Had the government invited the Muslim League to participate in the national government as executive councillors, it would have gone in With the Viceroy to keep the balance between the league and the Congress, there would have been few instances of friction If in a

cabinet with joint responsibility, the League members did not see eye to eye with the Congress, they should either get out or bow to the will of the majority. To get out of the government would be to take away its national character to bow to the will of the majority; would be to unsay what it had been saying for years. With only Congress members, there could never be a national government, national in the sense that it represented every interest and every shade of political opinion in the country. The times were not propitious for the formation of a cabinet with joint responsibility. The negotiations came to a sudden stop. An extremely painful surprise was sprung upon the Congress. There was to be no national government, no ministers and no cabinet. The political leaders who would be selected would be mere executive councillors of the Viceroy. The castle which had been built up with a deal of effort crumbled in no time. It was a fitting anti-climax to the travail of grandiose negotiations.

*Prof Coupland in a broadcast expressed the value of Cripps' Mission thus: "Sir Stafford gave Indian politics just what was needed, a dose of realism. For the first time, the Indian nationalists believed that Britain's promise to give India independence was genuine."*

Whether Indian nationalists believed in the sincerity of Britain or not, many did believe that the Mission gave Indian nationalism its much needed dose of realism. The Congress was made to recognise that the cry of the Muslim League for separation was not an idle cry to be ignored with impunity and that even if the Congress ignored it, there were others willing to recognise it. Even ardent Congressmen began feeling that the Lahore resolution of the League, in spite of its vagueness was a declaration of Muslim aspirations and hopes. Sri Rajagopalachari was the first Congressman to express dissatisfaction

with the policy of the Congress, for he believed that a national government was possible only with a permanent settlement with the League. Mr Asaf Ali, Member of the Working Committee observed: "His analysis of the motive for a Congress-League understanding is unexceptionable, if this understanding aims at unity of purpose in the face of a grave emergency which confronts the country as a whole." Mian Iftikaruddin, President of the Punjab provincial Congress Committee was more explicit than Sri Asaf Ali. He said: "The best way to work for unity is by conceding the right of secession. Mr Rajagopalachari's move therefore instead of being a Pakistan move is actually the most effective unity of India move".

History does not tell us of many instances of Congress-League unity and if at all Congress and the Muslims put up a joint front, it was during the Khilafat movement and for something which had nothing to do with Indian independence. Did the seeming unity that was forged during the movement lead to anything permanent?

The dark cloud at first no bigger than a dot in the horizon, gradually assumed threatening proportions and yet the Congress winked at it. Even when it was made clear to us that the British government was earnest and sincere in its offer of independence, we did not deem it worthwhile to come to terms with our fellow countrymen. If millions of people think and feel alike, though wrongly and foolishly and are prepared to defend their thoughts and feelings, they develop political power which in the face of opposition becomes increasingly aggressive. We asked for self-determination and it was given us with a vengeance.

What would the Congress do now? With the coming of Americans, British hopes of holding against Japan revived. Though the situation was critical, it was not desperate. The war effort went

on unimpeded. Britain enjoyed the satisfaction of having done her duty. Mr. Jinnah rejoiced that he had sown the seeds of Pakistan not on the way-side for birds to peck at, but in fertile soil and the they would in proper time sprout and grow. Congress believed that it maintained its reputation for lofty ideals and unbending courage but it did not solve any problem. By rejecting the proposals relating to the future, it only put off the evil day.

There was one man who advised the Congress to accept the position that the demand put forward by the Muslim League *could not be rejected with safety* to the cause of nationalism which Congress claimed to represent. He appealed to the Congress to get into the Viceroy's executive council. He tried to get Cripps' proposals accepted, lost favour in his party and before long resigned his place in it. He was none other than Rajaji. Realism was dead as a door-nail.

"Mr. Rajagopalachari wants a Congress-League settlement on the basis of Pakistan to get the British consent to the establishment of a national government. He is convinced that if the unreasonable demand of Pakistan is conceded, the League will join the Congress for the demand of a national government. As soon as this is done, the British government will yield. Is this view correct? Has it any historical basis? Is it a fact that whenever the Congress and the League presented a joint demand, the Government has yielded? (*Kripalani*)

"In a letter to Prof. Horace Alexander, Gandhiji said: "My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now and in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore, Malaya and Burma. That act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations, and right doing by India."

American papers which had been enthusiastic in their praise of Cripps' Mission and in their solicitude for Indian freedom could not generally understand the attitude of the Congress. Some of them were very critical.

"Congress control could be a dissolvent rather than a cement of resistance to Japanese invasion"

"India's decision is almost as important to the United States as to Britain. The United States with Britain and other nations fighting the axis has a right to ask India's acceptance of freedom which is qualified only by the demands of the war itself."

"There is justice in the Indian demand for participating in the direction of the war. Nor can the Americans consistently quarrel with the objection raised against the right of secession from the all-India Union which the British proposal provides".  
*New York Times.*



## QUIT INDIA

*Cripps' "dismal mission" disillusioned Mahatma Gandhi. He felt that the only way out of the situation was to ask the British "to timely and orderly withdraw from India". When he was asked to whom the British Government should hand over, the country, he replied that "under his proposal they had to leave India in God's hands", but in modern parlance, "anarchy and this anarchy might lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestricted dacoities".*

*Cripps returned to England and told Parliament the story of the failure of his mission.*

*"With the approach of self-government or Dominion status as a reality, communal differences of view as to the form of government suitable for the future in India had tended to become more definitely crystallised and especially, the idea of two separate Indias which even two years ago was little more than a vague decision of certain extremists had come to be a definite and accepted program of the most powerful Muslim political organisation, .....In the circumstances of the communal situation in India at the present time, it must be borne in mind that the future is inevitably linked with the present. I am confident that no temporary arrangements could have been reached without some exposition of our future intentions. ....Had we attempted to deal only with the present, we should immediately have been met with the demand for a clarification of the future..... It was, of course wholly consistent with the whole trend of earlier declarations that if all the sections of Indian opinion could agree upon some alternative*

method of self-determination, there would be no difficulty regarding its acceptance by the British government. But in the past, when it had been left to the Indians to agree upon some manner of deciding the future, the British government had been accused of relying upon the impossibility of an agreement in order to perpetuate their own dominion over India. It was therefore necessary to devise a scheme whereby the refusal of a large minority to co-operate would not hold up the majority in their demand for self-government." Sir Stafford laid the responsibility for the failure of his mission flatly on the Congress. "The position of complete power asked for by the Congress and which was not demanded by any other section of opinion would leave it in an impossible situation. The Executive Council once chosen by the Viceroy would not have been responsible to any one but themselves, or in a looser way, perhaps to their political or communal organisation and there would have been no protection to any minorities."

In April, the Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad and considered two important resolutions passed already by the Madras Congress Legislature Party under the presidentship of Sri Rajagopalachari. The President of the Congress observed that Rajaji should have discussed his views with his colleagues in the Committee before giving expression to them. Rajaji who was himself a member of the committee expressed his regret for not discussing his views with the members of the Committee but declared that he was not prepared to give them up. "I have explained to you already how strongly I feel. I believe I will be failing in my duty if I do not endeavour to get people think and act in the direction which my conviction leads to. I feel in the public interest I should move the resolution already notified by Mr Santanam. I therefore request you to permit me to resign my place in the Working Committee." His resignation was accepted.

Rajaji moved the first resolution. After stating the danger that stared India in the face and the urgent and absolute need for national government for facing the situation, the resolution said "therefore, in as much as the Muslim League has insisted on the recognition of the right of separation of certain areas from united India, upon the ascertainment of the wishes of the people of such areas as a condition precedent for united action at this moment of grave national danger, the A I C C is of opinion that to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a national government at this grave crises for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is a most unwise policy and that it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil and acknowledge the Muslim claim for separation, should the same be persisted in when the time comes for framing a constitution for India, and therefore remove all doubts and fears in this regard and to invite the Muslim League for a consultation for the purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a national government to meet the present emergency".

The debate on the resolution lasted three hours and when put to vote was defeated. Emotion triumphed over reason.

The other resolution was on the formation of a popular government in Madras. It declared its purpose to be "to secure conditions as may enable people effectively to offer resistance to the aggressor and to inspire them for all the sacrifice involved in the defence of the mother-land, the A I C C authorises the Congress legislature Party in Madras to accept responsibility of government if invited to do so and further advises them to invite the Muslim League to participate in such responsibility and to assist in the formation of a popular government for the province". This resolution was not moved. Had it been moved,

its fate would not have been different from that of the previous resolution. Who was in the right, Rajaji or the Working Committee, time alone could decide.

The All-India Congress Committee met in May. Rajaji faced it with courage which in any other person would have been sheer rashness. He told the vast assembly that "Congress should not fear any accretion of strength to the Muslim League but welcome it, as it would strengthen the nation." This indeed was queer logic and the President had to tell the members that Pakistan was against Islam and that the procedure adopted by Rajaji was wrong. The resolution was rejected. This did not come as a surprise to any one. The Working Committee was regarded as the brain trust of the Congress and the all-India Congress Committee invariably contented itself with giving the decisions of this august body the warm approval which they deserved. Errant members who sought to air their individuality were either ridiculed or booed into everlasting silence. Where the individual lost himself in the multitude, criticism meant gross indiscipline, a crime against the national organisation which was battling against odds.

Instead of accepting the presidential rebuke, Rajaji went on saying things which were unpalatable to the leaders of the Congress. At a press conference in Delhi he said that he was dissatisfied with the policy of the Congress. He believed that without a national front symbolised in a national government, it would be impossible to meet the emergency and a national government, according to him meant primarily a settlement with the League. "India will lose nothing if she gives the utmost freedom to the Mussalman areas even as the British empire has not lost anything by giving her colonies the Westminster Statute." Nehru was alarmed. He felt that the step taken by

Rajaji was detrimental to the interests of the country. He feared that Rajaji was breaking to pieces the weapon which the Congress had fashioned after twenty years of innumerable sacrifices. Rajaji admitted that the Congress had been fashioned into a weapon of great potency as the result of innumerable sacrifices of twenty years [but he asked if it was not all the more a tragedy that in the hour of supreme crisis Congress must watch things as a spectator. In a speech at Madras, he said, "I know that reason must have its weight and I feel so strongly that what I say is right, that I have the fullest confidence that Mahatma Gandhi will come round to my view":

Rajaji crossed the Rubicon, took the fateful step which might bring him the odium of a traitor's name or lead him on to the heights of fame as a statesman. Before long, he expounded his proposals for Hindu-Muslim Unity to an audience at Matunga in Bombay. Though he pitched his lone voice against the thunders of a great organisation, he had the satisfaction of being heard by some at least of his countrymen. Every word he uttered during those days was a challenge to the all-India Congress Committee. If his words had little influence on the votes of the members, he knew that their votes would be as completely without influence on the course of events. In the language of the play, his formula pleased not the millions; 'twas caviare to the general'.

There was frustration in the ranks of the Congress. The leaders felt that the struggle should be continued for passivity would be suicidal. It would emasculate and destroy the nation. The Working Committee met at Wardha in July and passed a resolution suggesting non-violent civil disobedience under the leadership of Gandhiji. No less a person than Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru said of this resolution thus: "I feel very strongly that nothing can be more dangerous in its implications or conse-

quences than the Wardha proposals, particularly at a juncture like this

"Mr Jinnah viewed it as a piece of blackmailing the British and coercing them to concede a system of government which would establish Hindu Raj immediately under the regis of the British bayonet, throwing the Muslims and the minorities at the mercy of the Congress Raj". Sir Stafford Cripps said in Parliament, "We are not going to walk out of India right in the middle of a war though we have no wish to remain there for any imperialistic reasons".

On July 18, Sri Rajagopalachari and three of his friends wrote Mahatma Gandhi a letter the significance of which in the constitutional history of India is inestimable. It is a relevant historical document and bears reproduction in full

Dear Mahatmaji,

We have carefully read the resolution passed by the all India Congress Committee at Wardha on July 14 which is to be placed before the meeting of the A I C C next month. In view of the far-reaching consequences of the adoption of this resolution, we feel it our duty having worked with you since 1920 to place before you our considered views on the matter. While there can be no difference of views over India's demand for complete freedom from foreign domination, the idea of the withdrawal of government being automatically replaced by another government is altogether impossible. The State is not a mere superstructure but it is intimately bound up with the functioning of every activity of the people that the withdrawal of the present government without a simultaneous replacement by another must involve a dissolution of the State and of safety itself. It is unnatural for any government to with

draw without transferring power to a successor by consent or without being forcibly replaced by another. The formation of a provisional government as well as the convening of a constituent assembly are possible only if the continuity of the State is assured. We feel, therefore, that however difficult the achievement of the Hindu-Muslim settlement may be, while the British government is here and functioning, it is essential that before a demand for withdrawal can be reasonably made, the major political organisations of this country, namely, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League should evolve a joint plan with regard to a provisional government which can take over power and preserve the continuity of the State. Even if we imagine that the British could even under moral compulsion be made to withdraw unconditionally, we are convinced that the chaos that will follow under existing conditions would not permit within reasonable time the formation of a provisional government such as you contemplate. We consider it wrong to formulate a demand which if complied with must necessarily lead to anarchy or to frame a program of wide-spread, self-inflicted suffering based on the refusal of such a demand.

Your proposal that while the civil power may be withdrawn the British and allied forces may continue in India in anticipation of a treaty with a problematic provisional Indian government will only lead to the exercise of all governmental functions by the military forces. This will happen if only for their own safety and effective functioning. They are further likely to be urged towards this step by local chieftains and suffering people. This would be the reinstallation of the British government in a worse form.

In spite of these objections, we might have submitted to your proposal if only because of the fact that the British are not going to withdraw, and in actual operation, the movement would amount to a

nation-wide protest against the existing government and may be productive of a satisfactory settlement in due course. But the critical international situation in which India is directly involved makes it certain that the party to gain immediately by the movement will be Japan. If the movement could possibly displace the British government, installing a national government capable of resisting Japanese aggression, it might be worthwhile taking all risks attached to it. But, as this result is not even remotely possible, it will only produce more intensive and large scale repression and suffering which will facilitate Japanese invasion and occupation.

It is hardly likely the authorities will allow the movement to proceed under central direction in an orderly and direct fashion. Even if we do not mind sporadic violence that may result from lack of proper control, there is another serious danger. When responsible leaders are removed and their guidance is no longer available, the movement can easily be taken advantage of by the enemy and be converted into a fifth column activity on his behalf.

Any movement started by you would have commanded our loyal participation inspite of differences of opinion, if the movement did not involve such grave consequences as pointed out above. Our conviction is strong enough to make it our duty to publicly oppose the proposal on these grounds. But it may be thought at this stage that your move will operate as a protest with an international appeal, and bring about a fresh approach towards a political settlement for India without actually plunging the country in direct action. In order that any step on our part may not lessen this chance, we refrain from giving public expression to our opposition but send this letter to you to entreat you to desist from



taking the steps you have adumbrated.

(Sd) C. R.

T. S. S. Rajan

K. Santanam.

On July 20, Gandhiji sent them the following reply:—

My dear C. R.,

I was about to write to you when your letter came. Of course I understand and appreciate the exquisite consideration running through your letter. I invite you all four to come here and pour out your love and argument to wean me from what appears to be an error. Any way, your monthly visit is due. You can come any day you like. What I wanted to write to you about was this. Why don't you form a league with Muslim friends to propagate your idea of settlement? Have you Q. A.'s reply to my note? Do you accept his definition of Pakistan? What is the common idea about independence? Surely, you should have a common understanding over fundamentals before you come to an agreement. Let not your fear of the Japs betray you into a worse state of things. But more of all this when you come. Love to you all. *Bapu.*

The All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on August 7 to consider the Working Committee's resolution and ratify it. The President of the Congress, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad explained the meaning of the resolution thus: "Let us not depend on promises. Let us have a declaration of independence forthwith and we on our part shall immediately enter into a treaty of alliance with the United Nations for the sole purpose of fighting and winning the war. The slogan "Quit India" means

nothing more and nothing less than the complete transfer of power into Indian hands."

Jawaharlal Nehru speaking on the resolution said that the "QUIT INDIA" movement was to be a fight to the finish. It contemplated the achievement not merely of national freedom but also world freedom. The Congress was plunging into a stormy ocean and would either emerge with a free India or would go down. It was not a movement for few days to be suspended and talked over. It was going to be a fight to the finish. The Congress had now burnt its boats and was about to embark on a desperate campaign. "He repudiated the suggestion that Congress was bargaining or baggling."

On August 8, after midnight, Gandhiji addressed the delegates. "The actual struggle does not commence this very moment. You have merely placed certain powers in my hand. My first act will be to wait upon His Excellency the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. This may take two or three weeks. What you are to do in the meanwhile, I will tell you. There is the spinning wheel. But there is something more you have to do. Every one of you should, from this very moment consider himself a free man or woman and even act as if you are free and no longer under the heel of this imperialism."

Gandhiji's last message to Congressmen on this eventful night was "Karenga ya marenga", we shall do or die."

He did not forget to make an appeal to the Muslim League: "I would pray to my Muslim brothers to judge for themselves dispassionately what is right and what is wrong. Let the issue be decided by a tribunal and let us all abide by the verdict of the tribunal. If the Muslim League is not

prepared to accept the offer, how can they expect to force their scheme upon others by mere coercion?" .....Gandhiji did not forget the Princes. He appealed to them for sympathy and co-operation and asked them to realise that their only chance of survival depended on the goodwill of their people.

When the All-India Congress Committee passed this historic resolution, the stage was set for a movement which was expected to make it impossible for the Englishman to remain in India as ruler. Like other movements initiated by Gandhiji, this also was to be a nonviolent movement, but unfortunately, as in the past, the movement gradually overstepped the line of nonviolence and ended in sporadic but systematic violence. When thousands of unarmed people wedded to nonviolence raise the cry "Quit India", a moral force is generated which becomes irresistible even to the hardened imperialist. What Gandhiji wanted was the raising of this cry in every nook and corner of this country which would disarm even the bitterest foe and stir the conscience of the world. Had the people of India understood Gandhiji correctly and followed his precepts, the Quit India movement would have been the most glorious freedom-movement in the world. But this was not to be. Indians, most of them, adored Gandhiji to the point of worship but they did not understand him. The movement set free abundant enthusiasm and produced a few martyrs but the majority of the people were satisfied with merely expressing sympathy and admiration for those who entered the fray. Most of us have an admirable reverence for the man who suffers for others and an equally cautious reluctance to follow his example. The movement gradually degenerated into something which could not even be described as a revolt. The common man wondered how the cry "Quit India" would drive the Englishman out of this country. He was indeed thrilled by the bold and open call to the

rulers to leave the country, but he did not betray any extraordinary enthusiasm in raising the cry himself and adding to its volume. He played the safe and passive role of the interested spectator. The average Indian thinks a little too much to be a revolutionary. Without guidance and without discipline, sporadic destruction went on for a while and the people suffered. Enthusiasm ebbed away and the nation stood disillusioned. The foreigner learnt from experience and became doubly cautious.

With regard to the moral conscience of the world, it was not then in its proper place. England fighting for her very existence and America fighting for her prestige had very little leisure to examine their conscience. There was considerable anxiety in allied camps. Though America had no leaning for imperialism, she did not want the British empire to vanish all too suddenly. They wanted the empire as a political entity to remain at least for the duration of the war. Two American experts published at this time a book entitled "A trade policy for national defence" and it was a strong vindication of the empire of Britain. When Prime Minister Churchill repudiated the meaning and application of the Atlantic Charter to the British empire, the President of the United States said not a word. This silence was significant as far as the moral conscience of the world was concerned.

The Governor-General in Council passed the following resolution "That the government should regard it as wholly incompatible with their responsibilities that a demand should be discussed, the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally, and would paralyse her effort in the common cause of human freedom." The Indian members of the Executive Council had to face a delicate task, but they faced it without sentiment. Sir Sultan Ahmed said in the Assembly

why he and his colleagues did not regret the decision "I have never regretted the decision which, along with my colleagues I took on August 8, because, placed as we were, we had to choose between complete abdication of our responsibilities as a government and surrender to the challenge thrown out to us. Anyhow after all that has happened, we feel convinced that our decision was right." The leader of the House Mr. Aney said that serious warnings were uttered against precipitate action in passing the resolution. Frank Anthony, the Anglo Indian leader took the same line but in a different way. "If they (Congressmen) knew that British policy was "divide and rule", they should have unity among themselves to defeat the object of that policy. Let the major elements in the national life of the country come together and resolve the deadlock. Let the majority community meet the demands of the minority instead of holding out threats to them."

Sir Cowasji Jehangir was plainly sarcastic. "Never have I known of two parties who would be parted if they were aware of the fact that a third party was out to part them".

There were indeed people in India who refused to believe that the "Quit India" resolution was the only means of winning Indian independence. There were others who could view the Indian situation dispassionately, and understand the point of view of the government. Master Tara Singh, in the course of his presidential address at the all India Akali conference told the brave Sikh community that England would not part with complete power during the war. He said "The British cannot entrust you with full military responsibility during the war. They cannot hand over the power of concluding peace with Japan or Germany on the mere promise that you will not do so. The English will not be wise if they ran the risk. Complete freedom of India may throw the

Indians in the lap of or at the mercy of Japan which is apt to result in the defeat of the British. So, this they shall not do, come what may. If they are to lose India, they will do so like brave men after fighting and not without fighting..... If the British give us the full power, with the army in their own hands, that will not be complete freedom. Freedom without power of making peace or war may glitter but it is not gold .. . If we Indians wish to arrive at a settlement with the British, we must be prepared to do so on terms in which we shall have to trust them to a certain degree during the war. This will not be a good settlement and may not be to our liking but there is no alternative to it... .. This violence which is being committed in India may do harm to the British but it will do us no good."

"Independence, in the real sense of the term, we cannot have now. We can possibly have it after the war. Now we can have mainly promises, pledges, and guarantees with full control over the whole civil administration. We must not put too much stress on words .... So, the best practical thing is that we must get all the power necessary for prosecuting the war. We must get satisfactory promises and pledges from the British government. After doing so, we must whole-heartedly throw ourselves into the war. Our future will much depend upon the power which we develop during the war. Nations are born in war and there is every chance of the Indian nation being born in the war. Indian nationhood cannot develop without war."

The "Quit India" resolution and the disturbances which followed it were discussed in the British Parliament. Mr. Churchill had his fling at the Congress but it was left to Mr. Atlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, to defend the policy of the government. He told the House and the world that Britain had done her duty. "The fundamental

difficulty we have come up against in all this Indian question is that you cannot get communities to trust each other. It is no good burking the question. It is no good making unpleasant remarks about the leaders of the Muslims. It is no good trying to belittle the great Muslim community. And when the people ask what the Muslim people have done, I say that the Muslim people have provided a very large part of the fighting forces. When trouble was raised, the Muslim people did not raise trouble in India."

"It was said that the government did rather something dreadful in proposing a solution. They have been asking over and over again that Indian leaders should come together and agree. It is not a thing that has happened this year or last year, this obstacle of trouble between the communities. It has been going ever since the beginning of Indian self-government. At every turn I have met it. I met it on the Commission, at the Round Table Conference, and on the Joint Select Committee. It has always been an obstacle that stood in the way. An Indian said, "We cannot settle this. You must produce a solution."

"It is the right of the Government to act at once to stop violence. —I was saying that this is no less in the interests of the Indian government itself. There cannot be a worse thing, particularly for the Hindus—the majority that has always depended on numbers and brain power rather than fighting forces—to have a precedent set up of a government which yielded to violence by the minority".

"It will be a good stroke of business for the axis powers if Japan and Germany could join hands India is the bulwark to the south of Ruasia and therefore we have the responsibility in the interests of all allied nations and to the people of India themselves.

You cannot break up an organisation in the middle of a war and throw it over to somebody else”.

“The suggestion is sometimes made that you can go round with new offers. I think everybody realises that if you have gone to the utmost as we did, and made the very fullest proposals we can make, no one can suggest that you should run round with offers”.

Britain was in no mood to go round with new offers and Congress was out of the political picture. The atmosphere was not congenial to the discussion of political and constitutional questions. The Hindu Mahasabha, with its policy of responsive co-operation was very helpful to the government. Its ideals were freedom and Akhanda Bharat. Its president talked of the glories of India that was, of the courage and valour of the Hindus who subdued the barbarous tribes that poured in from the north and civilised them. He had a dig at pro-Pakistani Hindus and at Sri Rajagopalachari “who has been exerting himself with more sincerity and perverse fanaticism than any mad Mullah known to history”.

Mr. Jinnah talked of the glories of Pakistan-to-be, of the ideal Islamic State and of the determination of the Muslims to bring it into shape in the teeth of every kind of opposition.

The Depressed Class Federation clamoured for villages far away from caste—Hindu villages. Dr. Ambedkar led them but he had not made up his mind whither. When Mr. Jinnah was genial and spoke kindly of the Depressed classes, Dr. Ambedkar exhorted his followers to embrace Islam which would at one stroke remove the stigma of their depression. Unfortunately, Mr. Jinnah could not always remain genial. Sometimes he developed into a veritable Fuehrer and Dr. Ambedkar felt compelled to turn to



Buddhism for comfort and consolation. Dr. Ambedkar oscillated between Islam and Buddhism but when he came to rest, he always found himself on firm Hinduism. The Sikhs wanted a Khalsa which would help them revive the glory of Ranjit Singh.

The newly legalised Communist Party of India did not wish to keep itself in the background. The Party eagerly wished to launch a Unity campaign. The main slogan of the campaign was, "Release Mahatma Gandhi and national leaders, stop repression, lift the ban on the Congress, negotiate for an all-round settlement, and set up a provisional national government for India's defence". This indeed was a comprehensive manifesto which the Communist Party alone could produce, and its characteristic emphasis lay on the "people's war". The Communists found themselves in a situation which would have appeared extremely trying to any other Party but they revealed even so early in their career that they were adepts in the art of keeping their legs in two boats. They were supposed to be Congressmen, and they were real communists. For their emphasis on the Peoples' War, the government rewarded them amply, generously.

The government of India went on indianising the Executive Council, the only thing they could do under the circumstances to show Indians that they were willing to transfer power and trust them to a degree. Though the Government of India Act did not recognise the position of the Indian members of the Council as such and the initiative had to come from the Governor-General a convention was evolved by which the Governor-General yielded his initiative to the council. During the war, all sorts of opprobrious epithets were thrown at them, but when the war ended, their very detractors used them as dependable props in the building up of the constitution of Free India.

One clear voice rose over the welter of many voices. It was the voice of one who had come to be looked upon as the tainted wether of the flock, meetest for slaughter. Long before Gandhiji in utter desperation thought of the Quit India movement, he had with clear vision seen the trend of events and counselled the adoption of practicable remedies. When Cripps came and Congress negotiated with him, he was the only man who pleaded for the acceptance of the scheme with all its defects. He had sent in a resolution to the All-India Congress Committee for a change of policy towards the Muslim League. His resolution was defeated. The idealists and the fatibful wondered at his temerity in suggesting things which were opposed to the accepted creed of the Congress. The President of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee felt that there was no place in his venerable organisation for a Judas and in the sacred name of discipline flourished his cudgel. On receipt of the Presiden's letter, Rajaji sent him the following courteous reply. "In order to be absolutely free to carry on my campaign for converting the Congress from its present policy, I have decided to resign my membership of the congress and to tender my resignation of the Assembly membership at the meeting of the Party on the 15th of July." The president of the Tamil Nad Congress was, to his utter chagrin, spared the exercise of his thunder. Rajaji was now a free man, free to speak and act as his conscience and judgment dictated. He toured the whole country appealing to people to look facts in the face, to exalt reason over sentiment, and to develop the sense of realism in politics. He pointed out the unwisdom of denying the Muslims the right of self-determination by which the Congress justified its demand of freedom. The attitude of the Muslims might be morally wrong but it was politically right. When Rajaji went on telling the people of India that the Muslum demand for self-determination was as just as the Congress demand for

freedom, they began to sit up and think. Before his parables and fables; before his sweet reasonableness, and suave manners, sentiment shied and fanaticism faded away. In the minority of one, he was making history, shaping the future of India.

The ideal is always at variance with the practical. Those who wish to shape the destinies of men must come down from the clouds and plant themselves firm on Mother Earth.

To Mr. Jinnah, he made an appeal: "To err is human and there can be no difficulty in finding out the faults of others, or in condemning them in strong terms. It is much more difficult to find a way to compose differences, but therein lies hope for this country. It is not only the Congress but Muslims too that continue in humiliation and danger. The Congress is in prison with a feeling, perhaps, that it has done all it could. But the responsibility of the League which is not in prison is for that reason all the greater".

Rajaji was not the only statesman who grieved over the unrealistic policy of the Congress. On August 29, after resigning his place in the Viceroy's Executive Council, Sir, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer made the following statement. "To me it is a matter of intense sorrow that on this occasion the greatest and most organised political party in India should have chosen what to me appears to be not only a difficult but barren path—a path of opposition.

## GANDHI - JINNAH PARLEYS

After "Quit India", the doors of the prison house closed upon Congressmen. The August disturbances, instead of frightening the Government into submission helped them to strengthen their strangle-hold on the country. The Japanese threat was still there and the behaviour of Congressmen to some extent lost them the sympathy of the Americans. British propaganda was successful in making the common American believe that the Indian Congress was not so innocent as it pretended to be. Wendel Wilkie, the author of "One World" drew the attention of the allies to the Indian problem. He said, "The Indian problem has become the acid test of our fitness to survive. To fail here is to fail everywhere. To succeed here is to force the truth of the President's words, "We of the United Nations have the power and the men and the will at last to assure man's heritage". The allies were aware of the Indian problem but they were aware of one or two things more. One was that the Indian problem was to be solved by Indians themselves and the other was that the war could be waged and won without Congress participation. Probably, the President of the United States felt that the time was not opportune to suggest to Mr. Churchill the liquidation of the empire. Britain was in no mood to be reminded every now and then of the unpleasant fact that it was her empire that stood in the way of easy and immediate victory. The well-wishers of India unwittingly injured her cause by over simplifying her political problems.

Political India was virtually dead. On it lay the pall of the Defence of India Act. Mr. Bajoria asked in the Assembly whether the Government were

aware that the Defence of India Rules had superseded the Penal code and the Criminal Procedure Code. Pandit Maitra followed up with the question, "Are they aware that even for the restitution of conjugal rights the Defence of India Rules have been used?". There was loud laughter, but in the eyes of some at least, tears were not far away.

While the Congress leaders were in jail, Mr. Jinnah seemed to dominate the politics of the country. In one of his expansive moods, he indulged in a bit of heroics to make the world understand how great and indispensable he was. He asked Mahatma Gandhi in prison to write to him. "Nobody will welcome it more than myself." If Mr. Gandhi is really willing to come to a settlement with the Muslim League, "let me tell you that will be the greatest day for both Hindus and Muslims. If that is Mr. Gandhi's desire, what is there that can prevent him from doing so? What is the use of going to the Viceroy? Strong as the government may be in this country, I cannot believe that they will have the daring to stop such a letter if it is sent to me. It will be a serious thing indeed if such a letter were stopped."

Gandhiji in all humility wrote to the League leader but the Viceroy had the hardihood to interrupt the letter and keep it from Mr. Jinnah. The Fuehrer had to swallow his pride. The reason given by the Viceroy to intercept the letter was this: "It rested with Mr. Gandhi to satisfy the Government of India that he can safely be allowed once more to participate in the public affairs of the country and until he does so, the disabilities he suffers are of his own choice."

Sri C. Rajagopalachari who knew the make up of the Fuehrer's mind exhorted him in language he could understand "to give up the vain task of

replying a letter which he never got." The Viceroy made no mention of the League leader and nothing really serious happened except a temporary pause in Mr. Jinnah's blowing himself big. For once he was made to realise that if he blew himself too big, he might burst. To disturb Mr. Jinnah's equanimity further, and to complicate the situation, Sri. Rajagopalachari evolved a new technique to hoist the League with its own petard. "Have your pound of flesh" said he, "a tiny lump to the west of Lahore, and a tiny lump round about Dacca and Mymensingh, poverty stricken patches. This is the utmost you can have in terms of your Pakistan resolution and your creed. Have it. It will be a good riddance for us, for then we Hindus shall be free to have a strong central government for the rest of India, a single party government under whose dispensation your Muslim minorities shall have to live. How does all this strike Mr Jinnah? Will he for a moment think that he is simply eddying about in blind uncertainty obsessed with meaningless egoism? The Muslim League on his account is still the concern of the easy-going, of those who would lie in ambush to pounce upon gain gathered by others."

On the last day of the year 1942, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy a personal letter. What Gandhiji wanted to bring home to the Viceroy was that he and the members of the Working Committee were innocent men wronged by the Government. Gandhiji had no opportunity of verifying the official version of the violence throughout the country. Therefore, he decided to crucify the flesh by fasting. "Convince me of my error or errors, and I shall make ample amends. You can send for me. There are many other ways if you have the will."

Letters and replies followed. According to Gandhiji, it was the government that goaded the people to the point of madness. The arrests started

the trouble. "If he cannot get soothing balm for the pain, he must resort to the law prescribed to Satiagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity." Linlithgow replied: "I regard the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail for which there is no moral justification and understand from your previous writings that this was also your view."

To Gandhiji, a fast was an appeal to the highest tribunal of justice. If he did not survive the ordeal, he would go to the judgment seat with the fullest faith in his innocence. "Posterity will judge between you as the representative of an all-powerful government and me as a humble man who tried to serve his country and humanity through it."

The fast was inevitable, Gandhiji announced his determination to undertake a fast of three weeks' duration. It was not to be a fast unto death but a fast according to capacity, a penance, not an immolation. The Government was willing to release Gandhiji for the duration of the fast but Gandhiji said that he would not fast if he were released. The fast commenced on February 18. The grievous news shocked the whole country. Even the Communist Party of India came out with a grandiose resolution. "Mahatma Gandhi's statement has swept off every obstacle, every prejudice that stands in the way of our great patriotic parties uniting among themselves and with the people of the United Nations". The leaders of the various parties and men of note who did not identify themselves with any party decided to call a conference to discuss the situation arising from the fast. Mr. Jinnah was the only leader who refused to participate in it. Three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Aney, Mody and Sarkar, resigned in protest against the apathy of the Government. They said that they were forced to resign because of differences on what they regarded as a fundamental

issue. Jayakar and Sapru at the leaders' conference pleaded for Gandhiji's release, "in the interests of fairness and justice". The soul of India was in agony and yet the Government remained unmoved.

Mr. Churchill who could never understand the ways of the "naked fakir" endorsed the policy of the Government of India, but there were others in England who were not immune to the influence of the spirit. The Bishop of Southwark offered prayers for all those devoted to the service of India and especially for Mahatma Gandhi. Bernard Shaw characterised the imprisonment of Gandhiji as "the stupidest blunder" and demanded that "the King should release Mahatma Gandhi unconditionally as an act of grace connected with policy and apologise to him for the mental defectiveness of his cabinet." The "Manchester Guardian" was evidently alarmed at the sad and bitter turn of events in India. It wrote: "What the Indian government and our government have to consider is not merely the barren question as to who is responsible for the disorders of the last autumn but the question is as to what sort of India, with what new and harder problems to solve will face us if Mr. Gandhi dies."

Mahatma Gandhi broke his fast on March 2, 1943 and the nation heaved a sigh of relief.

Prison life told severely on Gandhiji's health and spirit. The loss of two dear souls, Kasturba and Mahadev Desai was too much even for him to bear. Though he was a saint, he was ever true to the kindred points of heaven and home. Six weeks after Kasturba's death, he had an attack of Malaria and his condition caused anxiety. Even the Government did not want him to pine away and die in prison. On May 6, 1943, the Viceroy ordered the release of Gandhiji and his associates.



Lord Linlithgow left India in October 1943 and he was succeeded by Lord Wavell.

When Gandhiji came out of prison, what he saw and heard was not helpful in strengthening his spirit. He was shocked at the terrible frustration and the utter break-down of economy in the country. Many parts of India were on the verge of famine and Kerla and Bengal were virtually in its grip. Gandhiji wished to meet the Governor-General and discuss with him the state of affairs in the country. The interview was not granted. He pleaded with the Viceroy for permission to meet the members of the Congress Working Committee still in prison but the Viceroy did not find his way to grant the request because the "Quit India" resolution offered no common meeting ground. Wavell's attitude was openly disheartening. There was nothing to be gained by appealing to one who refused to be humane. Gandhiji was thus driven to the necessity of appealing to the world.

Fortunately for him, while he was resting and winning back his health in Panchgani, Stuart Gelder the Special correspondent of the London Daily Chronicle met him. Gelder took Gandhiji into his confidence when he told him of the eagerness of his editors to help in solving the political deadlock in India. He admitted that he had already met the Viceroy but with very little encouragement. The talk between Gandhiji and Gelder went on for three days. The correspondent asked Gandhiji what he would say to Lord Wavell if he met him and this was Gandhiji's reply: "I will tell him that I sought the interview to helping and not hindering the war-effort of the allies. But I can do nothing without meeting the members of the Working Committee, for I believe my authority under the August resolution ended with my imprisonment ..... It was not revived with my release. Gandhiji made it clear

that he would be satisfied for the present with something less than full freedom. There should be transfer of power and responsibility into Indian hands and the national government should be in full control of the administration. The four freedoms of the Atlantic Charter found no application to India and hence the "Quit India" resolution. The movement failed because of the violence of the people and the failure to violently wrest authority from Britain brought about a change in himself. "I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today. I cannot take the country back to 1942. Even without the authority of the Congress, if I wanted to do it, I could start civil disobedience today on the strength of my supposed influence on the masses but would be doing so merely to embarrass the British Government. This cannot be my object".

The Gandhi-Gelder episode enjoyed the widest publicity possible but produced little effect on the government in India or in England. The episode turned to be mere sound without significance. With victory in sight, the United Nations could well afford to think less and less of the Congress, of India and of Mahatma Gandhi.

Yet another year rolled on. The Muslim League went on propagating the 'two-nation' theory. Cripps' proposals had in them the germ of this theory but Mr. Jinnah rejected them on the ground that they fell far short of his expectations. The Government of India and of England now and then patted Mr. Jinnah but when he began asserting that even they *could not solve the Indian problem without him* and his League, they spoke of the Unity of India, its common culture, its common economy, and its defence. Rajaji was prepared to admit the principle behind separation and in July 1944, he expounded his "Basis of settlement". He declared in a statement

that he had the endorsement of Mahatma Gandhi for the terms he offered to Mr Jinnah. It was during Gandhiji's illness in jail that Rajaji got his endorsement though he spoke of it only in 1944. He invited Mr Jinnah to co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a national government for the transitional period. To determine the areas which would go to make up Pakistan, a commission should be appointed which would demarcate "contiguous districts". Mr Jinnah scented danger in the expression "contiguous districts" for it suggested something which was not apparent in the Lahore resolution but which was implicit in it. Mr Jinnah told Rajaji that he would not personally take the responsibility for accepting or rejecting his 'basis for settlement'. Later on, he found that there was more in the proposal than was visible on the surface and characterised it as 'a shadow and a husk, a maimed, mutilated, moth-eaten Pakistan,' and accused Rajaji of trying to palm off this spurious scheme on the Muslims of India. He vehemently objected to the holding of a plebiscite and described the suggestion for "demarcating contiguous districts" in the north-east and in the north west of India as ridiculous. The Lahore resolution had only said "geographically contiguous units" where the Muslims happened to be in the majority. It was indeed a painful surprise to Mr Jinnah when it was suggested to him that his very vagueness was a source, not of strength but of weakness, to him. While Mr Jinnah was more than frightened by Rajaji's Basis of Settlement, the Congress Working Committee which met in 1945 said nothing about it. Even Gandhiji who attended the meeting did not refer to it. Perhaps, the members of the Working Committee looked upon the proposals with disapproval if not with resentment. Perhaps, they regarded them as proposals of appeasement. They little realised that the stone which the builders rejected was to be the corner-stone of the edifice of free India.

Gandhiji once again sought an interview with the Viceroy but the request was turned down with the curt reply, "that in consideration of the radical difference in our points of view, a meeting between us at present could have no value".

Gandhiji, now in all humility turned to Mr. Jinnah. With Sri Rajagopalachari's formula he hoped he would be able to bring about Congress-League understanding, the first essential requisite of freedom from foreign yoke. "Brother Jinnah and "Dear Mr. Gandhi" met in Jinnah's Bombay house on September 9. They met almost every day and then wrote long letters to each other explaining and confirming what they had already said at the meeting. The talks went on for days and the letters too. In the course of the talks Gandhiji suggested that he should be allowed to place his proposal before the Working Committee of the League and in case of his failure in convincing the Committee, to place it before an open convention of the League. Brother Jinnah felt that fraternisation was going too far and cried halt. The talks ended on September 26 and no one was wiser than before.

Jinnah clung to his two-nation theory and separation. He said: "By all the canons of international law, we are a nation. We are a nation with our distinctive culture and civilisation, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws, moral codes, aptitudes and ambitions". Gandhiji satisfied himself with the simple observation that he found no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from their parent stock".

Gandhiji was but remembering history. Jinnah was "making" history.

Gandhiji was prepared to allow self-determination for Muslims where they were in the majority

Those parts of the country where Mussalmans were in the majority would have the right to decide if they should keep away from the Indian Union. If they wished to separate, they could form a separate State as soon as India became free. The two States would then set up one common administration for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Communications, Commerce and the like. Jinnah rejected this plan. He wanted partition before India became free, while the British were still here. He did not want any unified administration. Separation first, and independence afterwards — this was Mr. Jinnah's creed in 1944.

When the Gandhi-Jinnah talks ended, Mr. Jinnah had the satisfaction of pluming his feathers before the League.

The Sikhs were alarmed at the manner in which Mr. Jinnah was shaping his Pakistan. The breakdown of Gandhi-Jinnah talks was regarded by most of them as the defeat of the Congress. The Sikh Conference held at Amritsar condemned the Rajaji formula and developed its own scheme of the division of the Punjab. Master Tara Singh, the President said that if the Muslims could not be prevailed upon to remain in a united India, the Sikhs cannot be forced to go out of a united India. The Sikh Communists, on the other hand, were enthusiastic in their praise of Gandhiji. "This meeting has full faith in Mahatmaji's assurance to the Sikhs. Mahatmaji has given a lead to end the deadlock by accepting the principle of self-determination for the Muslims." Nothing pays so well as the knowledge how to butter one's bread and which side to butter most.

Now it was the turn of Lord Wavell, the new Viceroy, to enlighten the public. He thought it prudent to tell the people of India what they should do before they asked for political reforms, and a

share in the government. Conditions must be evolved which would ensure the fulfillment of government's duty to safeguard the interests of the racial and religious minorities and of the Depressed classes and their treaty obligations to the Indian Princes. Any transitional government would be possible only on the principle of agreement between Hindus and Muslims and all important elements regarding the method by which the new constitution should be framed. That agreement was a matter for Indians themselves. Until the Indian leaders came closer together than they were then, he doubted if he himself could do anything. "Let me remind you that minority problems are not easy. They are real and can be solved only by mutual compromise and tolerance."

The gradually worsening economic situation and the baffling political deadlock induced non-party leaders to meet in conference under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. The Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Scheduled Castes Federation did not lend the conference their co-operation. The Congress was not in the political picture but Gandhiji gave the conference his blessing. Lord Wavell having said what he had to say was pompously indifferent to the conference and its efforts.

## COMMENTS

In the course of one of his speeches in New Delhi, Mr. Jinnah indulged in satirical remarks on the Hindus. "When we passed the Lahore resolution, we did not use the word Pakistan at all. Who gave us this word? Let me tell you this is their folly. They started damning this on the ground that it was Pakistan. They foisted the word upon us and they talked of pan-Islamism. We ourselves went on for a time using the phrase, "the Lahore resolution popularly known as Pakistan". But how long are we to have a long phrase? I say to Hindu and British friends: "We thank you for giving us one word".

Not satisfied with hitting the Hindu Community, Mr. Jinnah turned against Gandhiji himself. He enlightened his followers with an enumeration of Gandhiji's achievements. "As to the question what Mr. Gandhi has done, Mr. Jinnah detailed nine Gandhi institutions. They were the Gandhi Asram, the Gandhi Seva Sangh, the Gandhi Nagari Prachar Sabha, the Gandhi Harijan Seva Sangh, the Gandhi Hindi Prachar Sangha, the Gandhi Grama Sudhar Sabha, the Gandhi Khadi Pratistan and the Gandhi Cow Raksha Sabha. The Grama Seva Sangha was the Mother Superior of all these institutions. Mr. Gandhi, besides dividing the whole continent into three definite parliamentary zones and appointing three parliamentary dictators also gradually developed permanent deputy Mahatmas in almost all the provinces and zones. The object of all this was nothing less than the production of a new privileged caste of Gandhists who alone were thought fit to hold office or rule the country".

Veiled and open vituperation of this kind helped Mr Jinnah to strengthen his hold on the Muslim masses who were dreaming of a vague Pakistan but neither he nor his followers realised that they were violating the very elementary canons of political polemic

While Mr Jinnah was gloating over his cheap victories over the Hindus he himself was subjected to scathing criticism by the very progenitor of the Pakistan idea Dr Abdul Latiff of Hyderabad blamed Mr Jinnah for surrendering the key position occupied by the League in Indian politics to other parties

“It was Mr Jinnah’s petulance that lost the League its key position in Indian politics”

Mr Amery said in Parliament that the British government would await developments in India till they became clear Earl Winterton who feared the government of India might give the Hindu Congress greater rights than they would give the Muslims got the consoling reply that there would be no question of the Government of India’s exercising one-sided influence on their discussions Sir Hubert Williams wondered if the fifty million people described as untouchables would have some consideration as well as Mr. Gandhi The reply was ‘they do not enter the present negotiations, if indeed negotiations were in progress’

The Rt Hon ble Srinivasa Sastri summed up the views of the general public on the breakdown of the Gandhi Jinnah talks ‘The Satyagrahis will not admit defeat but they are few The rest of us cannot help feeling depressed by the breakdown The British Tories have cause to rejoice Does the breakdown restore the status quo ante? Is the Gandhi - C R formula killed once for all? I should like to know it



was But, supposing negotiations are to be resumed, will the Congress be free to disown it utterly? I have misgivings unless the rank and file who are now dumb compel the High Command to recognise the weight of public opinion, we shall plough the sands again. Gandhiji must free himself from the Pakistan obsession if his future services to the motherland are to maintain the qualities of wisdom and foresight. Mr Jinnah shares the responsibility of these abortive talks with the Mahatma. He has not abated one jot of his demands or shown the least desire to see the other man's point of view. He rejected out of hand the suggestion of arbitration which is going to be the saviour of the world from the dangers of international strife."

Dr Ambedkar, member, Viceroy's Executive Council and leader of the Scheduled Castes addressed his party members in Madras in September 1944. He attacked the Upanishads, the Vedas and the Gita and then claimed a share of sovereign power in Swaraj. "I should like to serve notice upon them (Congress) that the Swaraj government must be a government in which the Hindus, the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes will be heirs to sovereign power. We shall do anything to achieve this object. There will be no limit to our sacrifice. The constitution must be a tripartite constitution in which the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Scheduled Castes will have equal place and equal authority. If you want freedom you have to accept these terms. If you don't get freedom, the blame will be entirely on your shoulders, not on ours. Make no mistake about this."

Dr Ambedkar had a lively sense of his own importance and of the importance of his community and hence he was perfectly justified in administering a serious warning to the leaders of the Congress.

## WAVELL PLAN

The year 1944 was an year of gloom and frustration. Something was dead in each one of us and what was dead was hope. There was little talk of politics and it seemed that India had resigned herself to her fate. The Congress was in the wilderness chewing the cud of past achievements and looking wistfully into the dim future. The Muslim League, though not actively participating in the war-effort, allowed its followers to diligently cajole the government for a share in the booty of controls and contracts. The Hindu Mahasabha with its ideal of militant Hinduism lent the government its hearty co-operation and found for itself places in the Viceroy's Executive Council. Dr. Ambedkar lorded over the Scheduled Castes Federation. The British government and the Governor-General bided their time. Public life was dominated by men with no definite convictions and with no enduring loyalties. Make hay while the sun shines, seemed to be the motto of most of those men who in the short span of two or three years amassed fortunes which easily shamed the fabulous treasures of the Nizam himself. A Veritable El Dorado was there which did not require the reckless courage of a Pizarro to exploit. When you asked one of these men why he garlanded the Governor, why he collected contributions to the war fund (or Governor's fund), he blandly told you that if he did not do it, there were others willing. He did not justify what he did but he tried to make it appear that it was his neighbour who made a knave of him. Opportunism and greed became the virtues of the hour and the paragons of these virtues became princes of the black market. Euthusiasm for war-effort covered a multitude of sins. The year 1944 was the year in which our countrymen

bartered away their eternal jewel for the blandishments of Mammon

It was in this year that Mr Jinnah attained the height of his popularity. He enjoyed the good-will of the Governor-General and of the British Prime Minister who encouraged him to believe that he could apply the brake to the political advance of India. It seemed that political progress in India depended on the whim of this leader of the Muslim League. No wonder, at the end of the session of the League Working Committee at Lahore in July 1944, he said triumphantly, 'Insha Allah, Pakistan is coming'. Mr Jinnah was indeed an astute politician and a born leader of men but he had not the breadth of vision and foresight of the real statesman. He gambled for high stakes and for a time seemed to succeed.

Now we come to the year 1945. The European war was drawing to a close, Victory was well within sight but England was exhausted. She was in no mood to cling to an empire which seemed almost to crush her. Lord Wavel, the Viceroy realised that his administration had neither the strength nor the resources to face the twin tasks of carrying on the war against Japan and planning for the post-war period. He was shrewd enough to discern that the smouldering political discontent might blaze forth at any time. Many in England shared his views and openly stated that political changes in India could no longer be delayed. The Viceroy took in the spirit of the times and went to London to consult the British cabinet regarding the political future of India.

Public opinion in England was reflected by the London Times which wrote thus on March 20, "There is a general conviction that it is for this country to resume the political initiative. First, it is proposed that the British government should now

begin a gradual remodelling of the structure, staffing and procedure of the governmental machine in preparation for the complete transfer of power to Indian hands, and secondly, that the persistence of the antagonisms now sundering the parties and interests of India constitute a reproach to British as well as Indian statesmanship "

The Viceroy returned to India on the 14th of June with a plan approved by the government for constitutional advance in this country To render the atmosphere conducive to the success of the plan, he released the President and leaders of the Congress and sent invitations to every party and community, to the ex Premiers of the provinces, to the leaders in the Central Assembly of the Congress and of the League, and finally to Mahatma Gandhi and Jinnah to meet at Simla on the 25th of June The invitees duly met in conference There was a good deal of deliberation open and secret but on the 14th of July the Viceroy announced the failure of the conference. The leaders left Simla, some sadder and wiser, others triumphant and proud A mountain was in labour but it failed to bring forth even the proverbial mouse

The Wavell Plan did not offer complete, unadulterated freedom, but went a good deal towards "a gradual remodelling of the structure, staffing and procedure of the governmental machine in preparation for the complete transfer of power into Indian hands" The Viceroy's Executive Council was to continue as the Executive council but it would be Indianised almost completely The Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would be the only two Englishmen in it Even Finance and Foreign Affairs would be handed over to Indians The Executive Council was not, however, a cabinet, and the Viceroy would be in full possession of his power of veto but he would not use it unreasonably The new

government would be a government with popular support but not a regular popular government. The Viceroy would ask the leaders of parties to furnish him with lists of persons and he himself would make the choice of members. There was to be parity between Muslims and caste Hindus or in plain language, there would be as many Muslims members as there would be caste Hindu members. Viewed as the step towards freedom, this plan was not unattractive.

The Viceroy received lists from all parties except from the European group which desired not to have any representation, and from the Muslim League. The attitude of the League was disheartening but the Viceroy was determined that the Conference should not fail, until he had made every effort to bring it to a successful end. He, therefore, made his own personal selection including Muslim League members and he had every reason to believe that if those selections were acceptable here they would as well be acceptable to His Majesty's government. He thought that his selection would have given a balanced and efficient executive council the composition of which would have been personally acceptable to all parties. He did not, however, find it possible to accept the claim of any party in full. When he explained his solution to Mr Jinnah he (Mr Jinnah) told him that it was not acceptable to the Muslim League and he was so decided that the Viceroy felt that it would be useless to continue the discussion.

Those of us who are nurtured in the tradition of the Congress may find it hard to reconcile ourselves with the precipitancy of the Congress to fall in line with the Viceroy. Those who went into the wilderness three years ago for an absolutely free government, for a national government, for a cabinet government, those who considered it *infra dig* to become executive councillors of the Viceroy, those

who would not even touch Cripps' proposals, were now willing to become executive councillors with no definite promise for the future. The co-operation they denied in 1942, when to give would have been graceful, without which England successfully waded through the war, they were willing to offer now when it was not so much needed by the British. The Congress President had a word of explanation to offer. "The proposals were presented to us suddenly. On June 15, I and my colleagues were released and we had to take a decision straightway on the plan. We were thrown into a new world and despite the difficulties, the Working Committee decided to participate in the Conference." This explanation did not convince then nor does it now because it does not tell us why the Congress decided to participate. Perhaps the Working Committee felt that there was nothing wrong in trying the constitutional path if it promised to take us anywhere near the goal. Perhaps the years in the wilderness were not after all barren and futile, as some people supposed.

The Working Committee recommended fifteen names. There were five Muslims, five Hindus, two representatives of the Scheduled Castes, one Sikh and one Parsi. In their eagerness to make the plan succeed, they agreed to parity between the League and the Congress. The very eagerness of the Congress to get into the Executive Council and into the government which promised nothing more than the shadow of freedom and responsibility roused the suspicion of the Muslim League. It was the cardinal faith of the leader of the Muslim League that what was good for the Congress was not good for the League. The Wavell Plan, when it was examined, proved to be a veritable Pandora's box. Those who had come to co-operate in a common cause began accusing and abusing one another. All the ills were loosed and not even hope remained.

After the conference, Mr. Jinnah made a statement explaining the position of the League. "Instead of equality, they (the Muslims) would get one-third representation in the executive council. The minorities did not accept the Muslim League goal of Pakistan. They were with the Congress in this matter. Their ideology and objectives were the same as those of the Congress Muslims, therefore, had no safety in the proposed arrangement.....As the Muslim League had to bear responsibility for matters affecting the Muslims, it should have the full choice of its representatives. He, therefore objected to the panel system. But the more substantial objection was to accepting any non-League Muslim."

Mr. Jinnah was shrewd enough to take advantage of the Viceroy's generosity in recognising the League's claim for parity with the Hindu Congress, and to ask for more. He told the Viceroy that he alone should have the right of nominating all the Muslim members of the executive council. Till now he wanted parity only with the Hindu Congress other than the Scheduled Castes, but now he clamoured for parity not only with the Hindus but with all others including the minorities. He wanted to convert the Muslim League, a mere minority into a majority. This indeed was a tall claim which even the obliging Viceroy could not grant. While pleading for the Muslim League, Jinnah was trying to translate his two-nation theory into a concrete fact.

Jawaharlal Nehru's reaction to Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory was that of a disillusioned idealist. "The modern tendency is for the idea of a nation not to be confused with the idea of a State. The biggest countries today are multinational. Even supposing there are two, three or four nations in India, the problem is how they are to get along together.....It is absurd to talk of any one domina-

ting eighty millions of people. The whole idea is fantastic. My plane of thinking is entirely different from Mr. Jinnah's."

Mr Jinnah had no use for theories ancient or modern. He wanted Pakistan. He believed that Hindus and Muslims were different nations and that they cannot get along together. Those who cannot get along together, must separate. His solution was simple. He was not going to follow history but was making one himself. After the Conference, he felt that he had won a resounding victory. His reputation rose among his followers. He had the satisfaction of making the world understand that he could apply the brake to India's march towards Independence.

From his manouvrings it was clear that Mr. Jinnah was not interested in the immediate issue of a few seats in the government. He was interested in the issue of Pakistan as the Congress was in the issue of a united India. As Stafford Cripps pointed out, "the obvious cause of the breakdown was not so much the constitution of an interim government as the influence the temporary arrangement was likely to have on the more permanent which would have to be made on the future government of India." As a political leader, Mr. Jinnah was perfectly justified in viewing with suspicion anything which came between him and his ideal of Pakistan.

In spite of Congress denunciations, it remained an indubitable fact that the Muslim League in 1945 spoke for the vast majority of the Muslims of India. Jawaharlal Nehru in his impatience at what he regarded as Jinnah's truculence indulged in wholesale condemnation of the League. "We have now come to the conclusion that it is in the best interests of the country to keep away from the Muslim League leaders hereafter. We shall take the Muslims into our confidence. We shall do everything to satisfy



their demands and win them over to the Congress, but we shall not go again to the Muslim League leaders " Brave words break no bones nor do they solve any problem We were indeed willing to take the misguided Muslims into our confidence but were they willing to come into it ? We forgot that it was the good Muslims whom we loved so much who made the League and its leaders The only thing which could serve us then were the wisdom and humility of the squirrel which told the proud mountain

All sorts of things and weather  
Must be taken together,  
To make up a year  
And a sphere "

No account of the Wavell Plan would be complete without a reference to another plan which was made in January and which was known as the Desai-Liaquat Ali pact Sri Desai was the leader of the Congress Party in the central legislature and Liaquat Ali was the deputy leader of the Muslim League

Proposals for the formation of an interim government at the Centre -

The Congress and the League agree that they will join in forming an interim government at the Centre The composition of such a government will be on the following lines -

Equal number of persons nominated by the Congress and the League in the Central Executive  
Persons nominated need not be members of the Central legislature

Representatives of minorities, in particular, Scheduled Castes and Sikhs

The government will be formed and will function within the framework of the existing government of India Act. It is, however, understood that if the cabinet cannot get a particular measure passed by the central legislature, they will not enforce the same by resort to any of the reserve powers of the Governor-General.

It is agreed between the Congress and the League that if such an interim government is formed, the first step would be to release the Working Committee members of the Congress.

The steps by which efforts would be made to achieve this end are at present indicated to take the following course:—

On the basis of the above understanding, some way should be found to get the Governor-General make a proposal or suggestion that he desires an interim government to be formed at the Centre on the agreement between the Congress and the League and when the Governor-General invites Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Desai either jointly or separately, the above proposals should be made, desiring that they are prepared to join in forming the Government.

The next step will be to get the withdrawal of Section 93 in the provinces and to form as soon as possible provincial governments on the lines of a coalition."

This pact or formula was the first authoritative and formal attempt at coming together of the League and the Congress.

Sri Desai took Gandhiji into his confidence and for what we know, won his valued approval of the venture. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan must have spoken to his leader and won his tacit consent. The two

leaders evolved this formula in January but for reasons unknown, they did not or could not work it up towards the desired end. Months passed and in June came the Simla conference. Lord Wavell would have taken the hint, if at all he needed one, for parity between Congress and the League from the Desai Liaquat Ali formula the details of which had then become an open secret. When Mr Jinnah arrogated to himself the right of nominating all the Muslim members of the Executive Council, he must have had in mind this formula. Again, when the Congress accepted the principle of parity between the League and itself, it showed it had knowledge of Mr. Desai's commitment. The Working committee, to emphasise the national character of the Congress, perhaps qualified its acceptance of parity with the disturbing condition that it could include among its nominees Muslims also. Mr Jinnah then revealed that he too had principles of his own.

The Wavell experiment pointed a moral, a grim moral but in our enthusiasm for theories and ideologies, we disdained even to notice it. We relied upon theories of democracy, upon the right of numerical majorities to force their will, though non-violently, on unwilling and misguided minorities. We were blind to the facts of history, facts which did not conform to our notions and creeds.

We did not succeed in convincing the Muslims of the existence of a strong sentiment of community created by the trials of historic circumstance. We refused to recognise that the imperfect sentiment of nationality which we possessed was mainly a sentiment imposed upon us by foreign conquest. Whenever the foreigner showed signs of even mildly relaxing his hold upon us, our Muslim brethren got alarmed and appealed to him for protection. The story of the freedom movement in India is also the story of the Muslim movement for separation. Those

who had been saying that Mr. Jinnah was crying for the moon must have been shocked at the supreme confidence with which he addressed his followers after the Simla conference. "Let us go ahead with measures for a permanent constitutional settlement. Pakistan must be decided. We shall never surrender on the issue of Pakistan to anybody as our claim is a just and religious one and is the only solution for India".

It was not Mr. Jinnah alone who thought that Pakistan was the only solution for India's problem. Sir Stafford Cripps, in the course of a statement in London on July 25 suggested that elections would be held in India and after they were completed, a constituent assembly should be set up either on the basis put forward in the British government's proposals of 1942 or on any other basis that could be agreed upon between the major parties. Knowledge that a constituent assembly would be formed out of those elected would make the question as to the future constitution the major issue of the elections .. "It is to be hoped that some compromise solution of the Pakistan issue could be arrived at in a constituent assembly, but, if not, there must be a clear decision before-hand that those provinces in which there is Muslim majority would not be forced against their will into a united India under a constitution which they did not approve. It would not be right to allow any minority, however large and important, to hold up the attainment of self-government in India any more than it would be right to force the Muslim majority provinces into a constitutional arrangement to which they took fundamental objection."

Labour victory in England was the sign for Lord Wavell to resume his political experiment. The Labour government which assumed office on August, 3, was eager to review with Lord Wavell the whole field of the problems with which India was con-

fronted. After announcing the decision that general elections would be held in India, the Viceroy went to London. On September 10, he returned and told the Indian people the result of his discussions with the British cabinet. He said after elections in the cold weather, provincial autonomy would be restored in provinces where leaders of political parties were willing to accept ministerial responsibility. He added that it was the intention of His Majesty's government to convene as soon as possible a constitution-making-body and as a preliminary step they had authorised him to undertake immediately after the elections, discussions with representatives of the legislative assemblies of the provinces to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 declaration were acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme was preferable. He would undertake discussions with representatives of Indian States to ascertain in what way they could best take their part in the constitution-making body. "During these preparatory stages, the government of India must be carried on and urgent economic and social problems must be dealt with. Furthermore, India has to play her full part in working out the new World Order. His Majesty's government have, therefore, further authorised me as soon as the results of the provincial elections are published, to take steps to bring into being an Executive Council which will have the support of the main political parties."

"The above procedure seems to His Majesty's government and myself the best way open to us to give India the opportunity to decide her destiny. We are well aware of the difficulties to be overcome, but are determined to overcome them. I can certainly assure you that the Government and all sections of the British people are anxious to help India. I, for my part, will do my best in the service of the people of India to help arrive at their goal and I firmly

believe that it can be done. It is now for Indians to show that they have the wisdom, faith and courage to determine in what way they can reconcile their differences, and how their country can be governed by Indians for Indians."

The same day, Prime Minister Atlee in a broadcast on India from London supported Wavell's announcement of government's policy.

The All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on September 28. Sardar Patel moved a resolution expressing dissatisfaction with the British proposals and at the same time announcing the decision to contest the ensuing elections to the central and provincial legislatures. He resented the absence of any reference to independence in the British proposals. He felt that there was not the slightest change of heart on the part of the British authorities, but because of this the Congress could not sit idle. If they kept back from elections, unsatisfactory as the conditions were, opportunists would get in and entrench themselves in places of power. There was a sufficient number of fifth columnists to fill these places if Congress stayed away.

The Socialists moved an amendment but they were either withdrawn or were rejected. Dr. Ashroft, Congress communist, moved an amendment to the main resolution, but with considerable difficulty. He said that the Congress message had not reached the Muslims and there arose a storm of protest from the large gathering. Mian Iftikharuddin, President of the Punjab Congress Committee also indirectly referred to self-determination for the Muslims where they were in the majority and was rash enough to say that Muslims had gone to the Muslim League because the Congress had not enunciated their policy in unequivocal terms. When the amendment was

put to vote, seven out of three hundred voted for it.

The two Muslim Congressmen suffered heavily at the hands of the Sardar who openly named one a communist and the other a prospective fifth columnist. The resolution was adopted and passed without a division and the Congress declared itself in favour of fighting the elections.

The next day, a comprehensive resolution on Congress policy was passed by the All-India Committee. Acharya Kripalani, after tracing the course of Congress policy from the very inception of the Congress concluded with this significant observation: "The method of conciliation and negotiation which is the key note of peaceful policy can never be abandoned by the Congress, no matter how grave the provocation may be, any more can that of non-co-operation and direct action when necessary". Amendments by Socialists were all rejected and the original resolution was carried with applause. 'This was an unmistakable sign that realism in politics was gaining ground among those who guided the destinies of the Congress.

Before long, the Congress election manifesto saw the light of day. The statement on Foreign Policy was indeed grand and ambitious but what was of immediate interest to us was the statement on the future constitutional set-up of India. The constitution, in its view, must be a federal one with autonomy for its constituent units and its legislative organs elected under universal adult franchise. The Federation of India must be a willing union of its various parts. In order to give the maximum of freedom to the constituent units, there may be a minimum list of common and essential federal subjects which will apply to all units and a further optional list of common subjects which may be adopted by such units as desire to do so. The

manifesto aimed at assuring those who in the name of self-determination threatened to cut India to pieces of maximum freedom within their spheres. It also tried to mollify the Princes who feared that their cherished sovereignty was at stake. There would be no more encroachment on their rights than was absolutely necessary."

When the Congress was called upon to face the problems of the day, it deemed it wise to put its own house in order, first. There were many communists within the ranks of the Congress who since 1942 had been criticising and ridiculing the Congress and its policy. In September 1942 the Party passed a resolution which was not very flattering to the Congress. A committee of high ranking Congress leaders enquired into the charges against the Communists and prepared a report which concluded with the significant comment: "They have altogether forfeited the confidence of the Congress and are unworthy to occupy any responsible or elective place in the Congress".

The Communists had thus an unheroic exit from the Congress. Though during the war, they were wooed by the government and handsomely rewarded for their "patriotic war-effort", at the close of the war, they found themselves relegated to the background.

When Congress leaders came out of jail, communist reputation literally shrank. The political opportunism of the party brought it into disrepute among the people of India and brought on it the utter contempt of the very power which had liberally subsidised its "Peoples War". Communists should have been shocked when the government invited the released Congress leaders to Simla and threw their erstwhile supporters in the shade. With their ever-changing slogans, and ideologies they would have disrupted the Congress organisation. The leaders of



the Congress realised the danger in time and allowed them to go out with grace. As Jawaharlal Nehru said in the course of a statement, "No other political organisation would deal so leniently with its opponents. For the Congress, national independence was the prime objective while the Communists gave prime importance to other issues. It was no use fighting a battle of words when the issues have been clearly decided in action. No one should be misguided by the blooming name of Russia and communism uttered by the Communist Party"

The Communist Party decided not to put up candidates for the central legislature as the electorate formed less than one per cent of the population of the country. In short, the communist party did not think it prudent to stake its reputation in the country by seeking the verdict of the people on its policies and ideology. Consequently, the part it was to play in the elections was negligible.

The Secretary of state, Lord Pethic Lawrence announced in the House of Lords on December 4 that a Parliamentary Delegation would leave for India as soon as possible to meet Indian political personalities and learn their views first hand. He said that His Majesty's Government regarded the setting up of a constitution-making body by which Indians would decide their future as a matter of great urgency. He regretted that unjustified suggestions had gained currency in India that these discussions would be a fruitful source of delay.

Lord Wavell addressed the Associated Chambers of Commerce at Calcutta. His reference to "Quit India" and to the Government or Governments was not such as to please nationalist sentiment. His reflections on disorder and violence were in fact justified by the rising temper of the people who were throwing away impatiently the lethargy of the seven

was years. His emphasis on the various parties to a settlement wounded the vanity of both the Congress and of the League. The Princes did indeed feel flattered at the recognition of their importance but Congress circles refused to forgive the Viceroy for his calculated indiscretions.

## CABINET MISSION

There is a divinity that shapes our ends. Nations like individuals have a tryst with destiny and when time and persons adhere, things start happening with bewildering rapidity. No one in India had even the faintest notion that the second half of the year 1945 was to usher in the kind of political activity which would lead the country to the attainment of freedom. Destiny was bringing together men who for more than three hundred years had been content to remain apart. A miracle in human relations was being worked out the like of which the world had never seen and the wisest among us went on reminding us of the truth that with all our efforts, we are no more than mere instruments of an inscrutable destiny.

Violence was in the air. There were signs of disaffection in the ranks of the army. The Jabalpoore sepoys went on strike. Three thousand naval ratings in Bombay followed suit and held wild and violent demonstrations. The Congress tricolour was seen flying on the bows of His Majesty's ships. The mutineers held twenty ships and the warnings of Admiral Godfrey were quietly ignored. In the Central Assembly, Congressmen glorified the strike as a protest against British rule, but European member Griffith characterised it as a "mutiny, not in the technical sense, but mutiny in a real, full and practical sense".

Had it not been for the presence of Sardar Patel in the city, the situation would have gone out of control. He asked the ratings to be calm and patient and contacted the authorities. In the course of his address at the mammoth meeting held at Chowpatty, he warned the people against being hoodwinked by

the Communists. He advised the ratings to surrender and promised to get their legitimate demands granted.

The Victory Day celebrations were spoiled by mass demonstrations and police firing. This open exhibition of violence pained Gandhiji. "This mutiny in the navy and what is following is not in any sense of the term, non violent action. In as much as a single person is compelled to shout "Jai Hind" or any other slogan, a nail is driven to the coffin of Swaraj in terms of the dumb millions of India." To Aruna Asaf Ali who refuted his statement on the happenings in Bombay, he said "Aruna would rather unite the Hindus and the Muslims at the barricade than on the constitutional front. Even in terms of violence, this is a misleading proposition. If the union at the barricades is honest, there must be a union also at the constitutional front. Fighters do not always remain at the barricade. They are too wise to commit suicide. Barricade life is always followed by the constitutional. That front is not taboo for ever."

Against this background of mounting violence the year 1946 was rung in. On the first day of the year, the Secretary of State for India in a broadcast from London told the people of this country that 1946 would be a crucial year in India's history. He exhorted Indians to realise that he, the British government and the whole of the British people earnestly desired to see India rise to the free and full status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. He assured us of the fact that there was no longer any need for denunciation or organised pressure to gain this end. If there was a time when there was a cause for it, it was no longer."

Prof Robert Richards leader of the Parliamentary Delegation which visited India declared that

everyone was anxious to do something to further the interests of India not two hundred years hence, but in the course of the *ensuing few months*. The members of the delegation realised that India was on the threshold of tremendous changes and more restless than ever before. Mr. Atlee, the Prime Minister himself admitted that India was in a state of great tension. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell was behind none in telling us that great things were on the anvil. He declared in the Central Assembly that His Majesty's government had the determination to establish a new Executive Council formed from among the political leaders and to bring about a constitution making body or convention as soon as possible.

The elections were almost over. Sir C R Reddi, the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University commented upon them thus:

“I would only point out that the present elections have accentuated the communal differences between *Muslims and non-Muslims*. When Jawaharlal Nehru spoke in such confident terms during his recent campaign in North India, he must have thought, judging by the large number of Muslims that attended his meeting that some seats would be captured by Congress or nationalist Muslims from Leaguers. As a result of polls completed, both the Congress and the League have come out stronger than before, absolutely speaking, but relatively to each other they are as they were. This does not bring us any nearer the solution of the communal problem. On the contrary, League and Congress are further apart than ever. No doubt, they are united in asking the British to quit. It is a negative unity; there is no positive unity to give it strength and stability. I am not sure the League will not be glad to have Pakistan on any terms and whether it is as strong and sincere on independence as it undoubtedly is for the division of

**India and creation of Muslim States** The elections have brought out a new feature Till now, the Sikhs used to go with the Congress as a rule Now they suspect the Congress as being too ready to compromise with Muslims, so they have run their own candidates under their famous Akali banner and have won some seats defeating Congress candidates — a sure indication that in the settlement of the communal problem, the Sikhs will have to be reckoned with in the future as an independent factor with whom also separate agreement must be reached ”

The Muslim League, inspite of its failure to have clear majorities even in some of the Pakistan provinces, established itself as the only party which could speak on behalf of the Muslims of India The nationalist Muslim or Congress Muslim made an inglorious exit from the political field What Mr Jinnah said about the ultimate aim of the Muslim League was now being realised “We are fighting the elections not to capture ministries in the provinces, but to give a decent burial to the Government of India Act of 1935 and thus establish Pakistan in the country” It must be said to Mr Jinnah's credit that he succeeded in demonstrating that the Muslims of India would never be a party to the evolution of a single government for the whole of India

While provincial ministries were being formed, the British government came out with an announcement which marked yet another stage in the constitutional advance of India Three members of the British Cabinet would visit India and discuss with Indian leaders the ways and means of solving the constitutional problem On March 15 Mr Attlee explained the policy behind the decision to send a cabinet delegation to India “There is complete agreement on the fact that India today is in a state of great tension and this indeed is the critical moment At the present moment the idea of not

ionalism is running very fast in India and indeed all over Asia. It is no good applying the formula of the past to the present situation. The temperature of 1946 is not the temperature of 1929, 1939, or even of 1942. The slogans of earlier days are discarded. Sometimes, words that seemed at that time to Indians to express the height of their aspirations are now set on one side, and other words and ideas thrust forward. We have united India and given her that sense of nationality which she largely lacked in the previous centuries and she has learnt from us principles of democracy and justice..... I am well aware that when I speak of India, I speak of a country containing congeries of races, religions and languages and I know well the difficulties thereby created, but these difficulties can only be overcome by Indians”.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State made it clear in their announcements that their policy was to promote *in conjunction with leaders of Indian opinion* the early realisation of full self-government in India. There were to be preparatory discussions with *elected representatives of British India*, and the representatives of Indian States to secure the widest common measure of agreement in regard to the method of framing a constitution. These discussions are to be followed by the setting up of a constitution-making body and by the establishment of an Executive Council having the support of the main political parties.

The British Government's announcement was a warning to Indian leaders to close their ranks but the warning was ignored. The Congress President was evidently not satisfied with the announcement. The League President was equally determined to cling to his view. The setting up of a single constitution-making body was unthinkable to the Muslim League and the formation of a politically representative

Executive Council an anathema. Mr. Jinnah regretted that Mr. Atlee had done rope-walking when he said "On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority" When Godfrey Nicholson, a member of the Parliamentary delegation said that India was politically adult, he paid us but a compliment

The Cabinet Delegation arrived in Delhi on March 23 and at once began their round of interviews with Indian leaders. After meeting the Delegation, Mahatma Gandhi said that it was unmanly to disbelieve them. The Congress President drew the attention of the members to "the firm, unalterable view of the Congress that a single constitution-making body should be formed to frame the constitution of India, of a single united India" Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer feared that the emergence of Pakistan would lead to the inevitable elimination of India as a world power. Pandit Nehru declared evidently under the stress of emotion, that "Congress is not going to agree to the League demand for Pakistan under any circumstances whatsoever—even if the British government agree to it" Gandhiji told the Mission that Pakistan which connotes a division of India will be a sin and the two-nation theory propounded by Mr. Jinnah is absurd."

Mr. Jinnah retorted "So far as Muslim India was concerned, the conception of a United India was impossible. If any attempt is made to force a decision against the wishes of the Muslims, the Muslims of India will resist it by all means and at all costs. We are prepared to sacrifice everything and anything, but we shall not submit to any scheme of government prepared without our consent."

We do not know how the members of the Cabinet Delegation reacted to these declarations of faith



The Cabinet Mission told Jinnah that it was not feasible to transfer power to two bodies and that the establishment of two Central governments could not be achieved under constitutional law and practice. Mr Jinnah refused to flinch. The Delegation found that the difference between the Congress and the League could not be bridged and were driven to the necessity of evolving alternative proposals which might bring the parties together.

The enthusiasm of the Cabinet Delegation was ebbing away. The protracted negotiations with sundry leaders of every hue and humour taught them the lesson that Indians had agreed to disagree. As practical politicians, they knew that the initiative had slid into their hands. They evolved a plan of their own and invited the leaders of the Congress and of the Muslim League to meet in conference in Simla. In the words of the Secretary of State, the object of the conference was to discuss the possibility of agreement upon a scheme based on a few fundamental principles —

The future constitutional structure of India will be as follows —

A Union government dealing with the following subjects — Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications.

There will be two groups of provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces, and the other, the predominantly Muslim provinces, dealing with all other subjects which the provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial government will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights.

It is contemplated that the Indian States will

take their appropriate place in this structure on terms to be negotiated with them.

When the Conference began, the Mission placed before it the agenda which literally bewildered the Congress representatives. The first day's deliberation suggested to the Cabinet Mission that there should be something definite for discussion if the conference was to make any progress. Accordingly, the Mission prepared "suggested points of agreement between the Congress and the League". Mr. Jinnah felt that the suggested points of agreement were a fundamental departure from the original formula. He disapproved the new interpretation given to grouping of provinces and declared that the League would never agree to the suggestion of a single constitution-making body. The suggested points of agreement only became obvious points of disagreement. The Congress was opposed to sub-federation and grouping of provinces and parity in executive or in legislature as between two unequal groups. Mr. Nehru suggested the appointment of an umpire to settle matters of dispute or differences between the parties but Mr. Jinnah never regarded his political demand as a justiciable matter. The conference failed.

Having come to India to make India free, the Cabinet Mission could not return home frustrated and crestfallen. The initiative had been completely surrendered to them by Indians and it was for them now to use it as well as they could. With the full approval of His Majesty's government, they put forward what they considered the best arrangements possible to ensure the speedy setting up of the new constitution.

The Delegation and the Viceroy issued a statement on the 18th of May in which they seemed to discard Pakistan without ceremony. "The figures show that the setting up of a separate sovereign state

of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem, nor can we see any justification for including within the sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This point would particularly affect the Sikhs. A smaller Pakistan confined to the Muslim majority areas alone would also be an impractical proposition. It would require a radical partition of Bengal and the Punjab and exclusion from Pakistan of the whole of Assam except Sylhet district, a large part of West Bengal including Calcutta and the whole of the Ambala and Jullundur districts of the Punjab. The division of the Punjab would divide the Sikhs and leave large bodies of this brave community on both sides of the boundary. For these reasons the Cabinet Mission found it hard to concede either a large or a small Pakistan.

These were not the only arguments which weighed with the Cabinet Mission in turning down the demand for Pakistan and for separation. They were alive to considerations of economy and defence, to the geographical fact that the two halves of the proposed Pakistan would be separated by seven hundred miles and that the communication between these parts would be dependent on the good will of Hindustan. There was yet another factor which they could not overlook. The Indian States would find it difficult to associate themselves with a divided British India. In short, the establishment of Pakistan, while solving the one problem of the Muslim League would create many problems for the rest of the people which baffled a practicable and just solution.

The denial of Pakistan to the Muslim League did not, however, mean that the Mission was blind

to its real apprehensions. They felt that the numerical majority of the Hindus would be a menace to the culture and to the political and social life of the Muslims. In a unitary India, Muslims would be but one of the minorities and would be compelled to toe the line of the majority. Mere provincial autonomy, as suggested by the Congress, even if it were full, would scarcely sustain the individuality of Muslim culture and social life. The Congress suggestion that provinces which wished to take part in economic and administrative planning on a large scale could cede to the Centre optional subjects in addition to the compulsory ones bristled with difficulties. "It would be very difficult to work a central executive and legislature in which some Ministers who dealt with compulsory subjects were responsible for the whole of India, while other ministers who dealt with optional subjects would be responsible to those provinces which had elected them, to act together in respect of such subjects. The difficulty would be accentuated in the Central legislature where it would be necessary to exclude certain members from speaking and voting when subjects with which their provinces were not concerned were under discussion. Apart from the difficulty of working such a scheme, we do not consider that it would be fair to deny to other provinces which did not desire to take the optional subjects at the Centre the right to form themselves into a group for a similar purpose. This would indeed be no more than the exercise of their autonomous powers in a particular way."

From this it followed that there should be groups within the executive and the legislature. The constitution of the Union and the groups should contain a provision whereby any province could by a majority vote of its legislature call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals. From the point of view of the individual provinces this indeed was a

necessary provision but from the point of view of the Centre, this was a very damaging provision. The seemingly generous and innocuous concession to the provinces was in reality an encouragement to the disintegration of the unitary centre. What the Mission gave with the right hand, it took away with the left. Something more interesting followed. "As soon as the new constitutional arrangements have come into operation, it shall be open to any province to elect to come out of any group in which it has been placed. Such a decision shall be taken by the new legislature of the province after the first general election under the new constitution."

The Mission concluded their statement with an appeal to the people of India. "These proposals may not, of course, satisfy all parties but you will recognise with us that at this supreme moment in India's history, statesmanship demands mutual accommodation. We ask you to consider the alternative to the acceptance of these proposals. After all the effort which we and the Indian parties have made together for agreement we must state that in our view there is small hope of peaceful settlement by agreement of the Indian parties alone. The alternative would therefore be a grave danger of violence, of chaos and even civil war, the result and duration of which cannot be foreseen, but it is certain that it would be a terrible disaster for many millions of men, women and children. This is a possibility which must be regarded with equal abhorrence by the Indian people, our own countrymen and the whole world as a whole. We appeal to all those who have the future good of India at heart to extend their vision beyond their own community or interest to the interests of the whole four hundred millions of the Indian people."

On June 4, Mr Jinnah discussed with the Viceroy the functions of the interim government

The Viceroy gave him the clarification which evidently satisfied him. In a letter to Mr Jinnah, the Viceroy said, You asked me yesterday to give you an assurance about the action that would be taken if one party accepted the scheme in the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 18 and the other refused. I can give you on behalf of the Cabinet Delegation my personal assurance that we do not propose to make any discrimination in the treatment of either party and that we shall go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement as far as circumstances permit if either party accepts it, but we hope that both will accept. I should be grateful to you if you would see that the existence of this assurance does not become public. If it is necessary for you to tell your Working Committee that you have an assurance, I would be grateful to you if you explain to them this condition." Encouraged by this assurance, Mr Jinnah went to the League Council and regaled his followers with his usual witticism at the expense of the Congress and the Cabinet Mission and then gave them his wholesome advice. "I advised you to reject Cripps' proposals, I advised you to reject the last Simla conference, but I cannot advise you to reject the British Cabinet Mission's proposals. I advise you to accept it."

The League Council accepted the Plan because "the basis and foundation of Pakistan are inherent in it by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces in sections B and C. The League would co-operate with the constitution-making body in the hope that the ultimate result of that co-operation would be the establishment of Pakistan. The Muslim League would always keep in view the opportunity and the right of secession of provinces or groups from the Union."

One need not be an astute politician to discern that the Cabinet Mission's Plan with its sections and

groups was a clear admission that against the background of a weak and vague Union, there would be a strong and definite Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah knew that the plan promised him Pakistan and if he had any fears, they were allayed by the Cabinet Mission's statement on May 26 in which they clarified the clause relating to grouping. "The interpretation put by the Congress resolution on paragraph 15 of statement to the effect that provinces can, in the first instance, make the choice whether or not to belong to the Sections in which they are placed does not accord with the Delegation's intentions". It was this explanation of the "intentions" of the Delegation and the secret assurance given by the Viceroy in regard to the interim government that influenced Mr. Jinnah and the League Council to accept the Plan without waiting for the decision of the Congress.

The Working Committee of the Congress met on May 24 and expressed its inability to give a final opinion on the plan. Then came the statement of the Delegation on May 26 in which the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly was half-heartedly admitted but not the Congress interpretation of the clause relating to grouping. Early in June, the Viceroy began his talks and correspondence with the leaders of the two political parties in the hope of forming an interim government. On June 25, the Viceroy wrote to the Congress President explaining the 'group' clause in such a way as to put the Congress at its ease. "The Delegation and I are aware of your objections to the principle of grouping. I would, however, point out that the statement of May 18 does not make grouping compulsory. It leaves the decision to the elected members of the provinces concerned sitting together in Sections. The only provision which is made is that the representatives of certain provinces should meet in sections so that they can decide whether or not they

wish to form groups Even when this has been done, the individual provinces are still to have the liberty to opt out of the group if they so decide ”

The Congress President was not dissatisfied with this explanation He wrote to the Viceroy that he and his colleagues had tried their utmost to arrive at a satisfactory settlement and that they would not despair of it “So far as the statement of May 18 is concerned our main difficulty was the European vote If this matter is settled, as now appears likely, then this difficulty also goes The second and remaining difficulty relates to the proposals for the provisional government which have to be considered together with the statement The two cannot be separated These proposals have thus far been unacceptable to us But if a satisfactory settlement in regard to them is arrived at, we should be in a position to shoulder the burden”

The Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy issued a statement on June 15 in which they bewailed their failure to bring the Congress and the Muslim League together into an interim government and suggested their own plan of a representative national government The Viceroy would issue invitations to individuals in whose abilities he had confidence The list of names which formed part of the statement contained five representatives of the Congress, five of the Muslim League, and four of the minorities, Parsi, Indian Christian, Sikh and Scheduled castes The Viceroy himself would arrange the distribution of portfolios in consultation with the leaders of the major parties The composition of the coalition government was not to be taken as a precedent for the solution of any communal problem It was only a temporary expedient suggested to solve a temporary difficulty and to obtain the best available coalition government The Viceroy and the Cabinet Delegation hoped that the major parties would accept the pro-



posals and make it possible for the Viceroy to inaugurate the new government on the 26th of June.

One particular clause in the statement, clause 8 served as an escape clause for the Viceroy in case the major parties, one or both, let him down. "In the event of the major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a coalition government, on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an interim government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the the statement of May 18." This clause was to become famous within a few days and to shatter the tender hopes of the Muslim League and its leader. It was intended to bring home to the parties that the Cabinet Delegation was in dead earnest. The Viceroy directed the Governors of provinces to summon the assemblies forthwith, to proceed with the elections necessary for the setting up of the constituent assembly as put forward in the statement of May 18.

The Congress at last took the decision. The President wrote to the Viceroy on June 24 that it was impossible for the Congress to accept the proposals for the interim government. In the opinion of the President, the Viceroy went out of his way in changing the list of names prepared by the Congress. Again, the name of a person holding an official position and not associated with any public activity was put in without consultation. There was no nationalist Muslim included in the list and the Congress was not allowed to choose its own nominee. The Congress would never allow a leader of a communal minority to interfere with the selection of names from either the Scheduled Castes or from other minorities. Parity of any kind was an anathema for the Congress. In the formation of a provisional or other government, Congress would never agree to the veto of a communal group. The

Working Committee for these reasons, said the President, expressed its inability to accept the proposals for the interim government but declared its willingness to join the proposed constituent assembly and strive for the framing of the constitution of "a free, united and democratic India "

The Viceroy regretted the first decision but welcomed the second. He told the Congress President that in view of the inability of the Congress to co-operate in the interim government suggested in the statement of June 18, a situation had arisen in which paragraph 8 of the statement took effect. As there was no immediate prospect of an interim government, he would form a care-taker government of officials to carry on the administration temporarily.

The rejection of the June 16 statement of the Cabinet Delegation by the Congress had unfortunate reaction on Mr Jinnah. The leader of the League who had been soothed and strengthened by the Viceroy and the Cabinet Delegation found himself let down all on a sudden by them. On the 25th of June the Working Committee of the League met in New Delhi to consider the June 18 statement of the Cabinet Delegation. Mr Jinnah had an interview that very evening with the Viceroy and the members of the Cabinet Delegation. He should indeed have felt honoured when they asked him to help them with the correct interpretation of paragraph 8 of the statement of June 18. They listened to his interpretation and then they gave him their own which he considered fantastic. The Viceroy said later that he explained to Mr Jinnah how the Congress had accepted the plan of May 18 and rejected the statement of June 16. While Mr Jinnah was arguing with the Viceroy and the Cabinet Delegation, his enthusiastic Working Committee passed the resolution accepting the statement of June 18. It must indeed have been a shock to the Working Committee to learn from its leader

and President that the Viceroy proposed to form an interim government only after a short interval Mr. Jinnah did indeed argue that the Mission was in honour bound to go ahead with the formation of the interim government as "all contingencies including the rejection by the Congress were contemplated and provided for in the statement of June, and clause 8 of the statement taken along with the context is quite clear". He suggested that elections to the Constituent Assembly should be postponed as "according to all documents and the two statements issued by the Cabinet Delegation on May 25 and on June 16, the long term arrangement and the interim proposals were nothing but inseparable and integral parts of one and the same plan" The Viceroy told him plainly that it was impossible to accept his suggestion that the Cabinet Delegation had gone back on their word and that it was equally impossible to postpone elections to the constituent assembly

Sir Stafford Cripps commented upon this incident in the House of Commons thus, "If either the Congress or the Muslim League could not consent to come into the coalition government, then the scheme of the coalition government went because it would no longer be a coalition and we would have to find some other interim government of those who accepted the scheme of May 16"

"Immediately we received the letter from the Congress rejecting the June 18 plan we saw Mr Jinnah and told him the position and informed him that the scheme of June 16 had fallen to the ground since the Congress had turned it down Upto the moment the Muslim League had not arrived at any decision regarding their attitude to the proposal of June 16"

Mr Jinnah went straight from his meeting with us to his Working Committee which had passed

a resolution accepting the scheme of June 16. Mr. Jinnah told his Working Committee what had passed at the interview. Mr. Jinnah seemed to think that acceptance by the Congress of the scheme of May 16 had put him into a false position and that we should have proceeded forthwith to the formation\* of an interim government with the Muslim League alone."

The Viceroy and the Delegation gave up the plan of the interim government on the ground that the biggest political organisation in India would be unrepresented in it."

The whirlgig of time brought forth its revenges even on indomitable Mr. Jinnah.

## CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The decision of the Working Committee was in due course ratified by the All-India Congress Committee, but not without opposition from the Socialists. Sardar Patel admitted that the proposal relating to grouping was likely to scare away the members but in his view there was nothing frightening about it. The Congress interpretation of the proposal was that the provinces were free to decide at the initial stage if they wished to join a particular group in which they had been placed. No province would be compelled to join any group against its own wishes.

Mahatma Gandhi said that the constituent assembly proposal would enable them to make the British quit India. If the scheme had defects, it was within their competence to remedy them.

Maulana Azad, the President, was enthusiastic in his appeal to the members to accept the constituent assembly plan. He said "By accepting the constituent assembly proposal, we shall lay at rest one of the long-standing communal problems. The division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan and two constitutions are now abandoned by the League by its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposal of May 16. The result of these proposals is that there shall be one united India and one constituent assembly with one central government. Victory has come into our hands and please do not turn it into defeat. The door of the constituent assembly is open to enable us to draw up our constitution. Please enter it and complete the task of framing the constitution."

This indeed was reckoning without one's host, baptism before birth

For the moment it seemed to the Muslim League that the Cabinet Mission and the Congress were in alliance with each other. Mr Jinnah was disappointed and disillusioned. He convened the League Council on July 20 and got a resolution passed withdrawing the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan. It was at this meeting of the League Council on July 2 that the famous "direct action" resolution was adopted. Mr Jinnah declared that the League was bidding good-bye to constitutional methods and adopting 'direct action'. He hoped that the direct action contemplated would not lead to blood-shed and civil war.

Fifteen days later, "direct action" began with the great Calcutta killing. A veritable "jihad" was in progress. The example of Calcutta was followed by Noakhali and Tipperah. Seven weeks of uninterrupted slaughter of Hindus and rape of Hindu women did not satiate the fury and lust of the makers of Pakistan. Miss Muriel Lister was an eye-witness to many a gruesome tragedy. She wrote thus: "Worst of all was the plight of women. Several of them had to watch their husbands being murdered and then be forcibly converted and married to some of those responsible for their death. These women had a dead look. It was not despair, nothing so active as that. It was blankness. The eating of beef and the declaration of allegiance to Islam have been forced upon thousands as the price of their lives. Perhaps the only thing that can be quite positively asserted about the orgy of arson and violence is that it is not a spontaneous rising of the villagers. However many goondas may live in Bengal, they are incapable of organising this campaign on their own initiative. Houses have been sprayed with petrol and burnt. Who supplied this

rationed fuel? Who imported stirrup pumps into these areas? Who supplied the weapons?"

On August 22, a *communique* was issued from the Viceroy's House and it said that the Viceroy with the approval of His Majesty's government had invited the president of the Congress to make proposals for the immediate formation of an interim government and the President of the Congress has accepted the invitation. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would shortly visit New Delhi to discuss his proposals with His Excellency, the Viceroy".

Nehru wrote to Mr. Jinnah inviting the co-operation of the League in the interim government. Mr. Jinnah's reply was characteristic of a man groaning under frustration. He confessed complete ignorance of what had transpired between the Viceroy and Nehru and went on, "if this means that the Viceroy has commissioned you to form the Executive Council of the Governor-General and has already accepted your advice, and proceeded to constitute the executive council accordingly, it is not possible for me to accept such a position on that basis". He felt humiliated because, instead of the Viceroy, it was Mr. Nehru who was asking for his co-operation. In his attempt to belittle the proposed national government, he dubbed it the Viceroy's Executive Council. Later on, Mr. Nehru had an interview with Mr. Jinnah but it did not help in bridging the gulf between Congress and the League. The League leader knew that if he accepted the proposal to participate in the interim government, there would remain nothing for him to talk about the Muslim demand and the Muslim goal of Pakistan.

On August 20, the Viceroy told the country that the representatives of a very large body of political opinion would be his colleagues in carrying on the government. He expressed his joy and satisfaction

at the decision of the Sikhs to participate in the constituent assembly and in the interim government. He assured the new government maximum freedom in the day-to-day administration of the country, but warned that in the field of provincial autonomy, it would not have any power and hoped that it would not have any desire to intervene. He did not forget to pacify the Muslims by reminding them of the fact that the procedure laid down for the forming of groups and provincial constitutions would be faithfully adhered to. If at all there was any dispute of interpretation, the Congress would readily agree to refer it to the Federal Court. Mr. Jinnah found no consolation in the sweet and soothing words of the Viceroy. He said that the broadcast struck a severe blow at the League and at Muslim India. He raised the bogey of civil war. The disorders in Calcutta and other parts of India were undoubtedly symptoms of the nearness of civil war all over India. Mr. Jinnah however, forgot that two can play at that game.

The interim government assumed office at 11 A. M. on September 2. Mr. Jinnah's friends in England at the Conservative Conference at Blackpool had a fling at the new government. After patting the League on the back, Mr. Churchill bewailed the loss of the great empire. "On the morrow of our great victory and our services without which human freedom would not have survived, we are divesting ourselves of the mighty and wonderful empire which had been built up in India by two *hundred years of effort and sacrifice and the number of the King's subjects is being reduced to barely a quarter of what it has been for generations*".

If Lord Wavell did nothing to stop the atrocities in Bengal, he did everything to induce the League to get into the interim government.



The reputation of the Congress was rising and the Muslim League and the Viceroy himself feared that the Congress would have its own way in regard to the constituent assembly and the framing of the constitution. Nehru and his colleagues were functioning in the manner of a responsible cabinet and the Viceroy found himself thrown into the shade. In the middle of October, the League nominees entered the government with objects diametrically opposed to those of the Congress. They were to act as the "sentinels" of the Muslim League, "to get a foot-hold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan". Jawaharlal Nehru was willing to recognise the League as the representative organisation of an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India. He was willing to recognise their unquestionable right to represent the Muslims of India in accordance with democratic principles. For identical reasons, he wanted the League to recognise the Congress as the authoritative organisation representing all non-Muslims and such Muslims as had thrown in their lot with the Congress. Nehru was justified in asking the Viceroy for an assurance that the League was entering the government with an honest desire for co-operation. There was no official statement on the subject of an assurance of this kind but the Associated Press of India tagged on to its news item the following comment: "The settlement now announced is believed to have been made possible mainly by the assurance conveyed through the Viceroy that the League entry is actuated by a spirit of co-operation and the will to work in harmony and that the League has accepted the long-term proposal with particular reference to participation in the Constituent Assembly".

Whether the League leader gave the Viceroy this assurance or the Viceroy volunteered this assurance to the Congress leader on his own initiative and responsibility, no one definitely knows. The state

ments of the representatives of the League in the government were not intended to show that they were parties to any assurance at all. Mr Ghaznafar Ali Khan declared with commendable frankness that in the interim government all the activities of the League representatives would be guided by two considerations, namely, to convince the Congress of the bitter fact that no government in India could function smoothly without the co-operation of the Muslim League and that the League was the sole representative organisation of Indian Muslims. "The interim government is one of the fronts of the direct action campaign and we shall most scrupulously carry on under the orders of Mr Jinnah on any front that we are called upon to serve."

Mr Liaquat Ali refused to recognise the leadership of any individual in the government. He denied the existence of joint responsibility but was willing to work in harmony. When he was asked if the League was willing to enter the Constituent Assembly, his reply was that he was not talking in the capacity of the Secretary of the League. Mr Jinnah, when asked about the success of the interim government, replied, "it is a very big question." He did not approve of the arrangement which has been forced on the League. "I think the Labour government in Britain has blundered seriously and is blundering. It is living in dreamland and is pursuing mistaken policies, may be, with the best of intentions."

The sentinels of the Muslim League refused to recognise the principle of joint responsibility. They came into the government not to govern but to make government impossible. The breaking of joint responsibility should have been as far as the Viceroy was concerned, a consummation devoutly to be wished. There was utter confusion in the government and this confusion was reflected in almost every province which hoped to take its honoured place in

Pakistan Sardar Patel admitted in the Meerut Congress that the central government was in a state of paralysis. Jawaharlal Nehru remarked that the atmosphere of the interim government had become so strained that Congress members had twice threatened to resign. He accused the Viceroy of gradually removing the wheels of the car of administration. "There is a mental alliance between the League and the British officials. If the League did not join the constituent assembly let me make it clear, whether they come in or keep out, we will go on. We will enter it, not in order to quarrel over petty things but to establish the Indian Republic"

The Viceroy sent out invitations to members to attend the constituent Assembly, which was to meet in December

The League was in no mood to respond. Mr Jinnah played his trump card. He said that the interim government should not be allowed to do anything administratively or by convention which would in any way prejudice or militate against the problem of the future constitution of India. The League would resist any attempt which directly or indirectly prejudiced the demand for Pakistan. He declared his inability to call a meeting of his council to cancel the Bombay resolution of non co operation with the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 15. His contention was that the League had as much right to be in the interim government as the Congress itself had. The Congress adopted the Plan of May 15 only with reservations. Congress refusal to recognise the Cabinet Mission's explanation of grouping was nothing less than denying support to the entire plan. The Viceroy and the Labour government seemed to appreciate Mr Jinnah's logic. The Congress found itself in an absurd plight. The Congress had entered the government to usher in the constituent assembly but now it found that the fate of that assembly hung

in the balance. Once again, Mr Jinnah's star was on the ascendant. He had fooled the Congress, the Viceroy and the Labour Government in England.

To find a way out of this unenviable plight, the Labour Government invited Indian party leaders to London for discussion.

Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh flew to London. So did Jinnah and Liaquat Ali. After long discussion there came a declaration from the British government which was in fact an admission of the correctness of the League interpretation of the clause relating to grouping. "Should the constitution come to be framed by a constituent assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's government could not of course, contemplate forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country. The essential part of the scheme was that decisions on the sections should be taken by a simple majority vote of the representatives in the sections. If the Congress found it difficult to accept this interpretation of the British cabinet, it could refer the matter to the Federal Court at an early date." This decision was given on December 6 and Jawaharlal and Baldev Singh flew back to India in time to participate in the opening of the Constituent Assembly.

Sir Stafford Cripps elucidated in the House of Commons the attitude of the government towards the grouping affair. "The government had also to envisage the possibility in the clause in the final paragraph of the statement. This was perhaps a statement of the obvious — that, if the Muslim League could not be persuaded to come into the constituent assembly, then parts of the country where they are in a majority could not be held bound by the results. The position has always been realised by the Congress which had repeatedly said that they

would not coerce unwilling areas to accept the new constitution. I do not wish the House to gain the impression that the position is therefore hopeless."

"We understand that Mr. Jinnah is prepared to put the matter before his council with a view to ascertain whether on the basis of the statement of December 6, they are now prepared to enter the assembly and we hope that the constituent assembly will show their statemanship and desire for accommodation with the Muslim League by not committing themselves irrevocably to anything that will make it more difficult for the Muslim League to come in at a later date".

Speaking on the Constituent assembly sitting in New Delhi, Mr. Churchill indulged in a little humour. "If a bride or bridegroom fails to turn up in the church, the result is not a unilateral wedding. The absolute essence is that both the parties should be there".

Major Wyatt suggested the shape of things to come. "We must say clearly and unequivocally, to India that on a certain fixed day we are going to leave India with our troops, with our officials and with any British resident who wishes to go with us. We must announce that date before the administrative machinery has completely crumpled on our hands. The date, I would suggest, should certainly not be more than twelve months ahead. We cannot allow British troops to be dragged into either side in a civil war".

Mr. Jinnah remained in London and was lionised by all those who yearned for a divided India. He had a successful Press conference where he said that he should be satisfied with nothing less than a separate constituent assembly for Pakistan. When he was asked if he was not, once a Congressman, he snorted out in triumph, "Once I belonged to a preparatory school." Mr. Jinnah knew that he had won the battle of Pakistan.

Amidst these rumblings of discord, the constituent Assembly met in New Delhi on December 9. The Congress and many other organisations were fully represented but the vacant seats suggested that there were many yet to come. Dr. Sachidananda Sinha was elected temporary Chairman. He spoke of the determination of the assembly "to frame a constitution reared for immortality, if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title." Messages came from the United States, from Australia, and from China wishing the assembly success in its onerous task, but none came from Lord Wavell, the Viceroy or from His Majesty's government. Lord Wavell perhaps thought it prudent to be away from Delhi for reasons best known to himself.

Mr. Churchill asked in Parliament whether or not the meetings held in Delhi on and since December were those of a valid constituent assembly, but the government spokesman, Mr. Alexander kept an ominous silence.

The constituent assembly did meet, but it was not confident of itself. Acharya Kripalani gave notice of a resolution to set up a committee of fifteen members to frame rules of procedure regarding sections and committees. When he began moving the resolution, he dropped the words "sections and committees" and said that they were by implication parts of the constituent assembly. There were members who took serious objection to the dropping of these words. They did not wish to alienate the Muslims when they came in. Dr. Shyam Prasad Mukerjee insisted on his mentioning the words which were originally part of the resolution. Mr. Nehru who had advised the omission now supported the retention of the words.

On December 13, Pandit Nehru moved the objective resolution. To him, it was not a mere

resolution but "a declaration, a firm resolve, a pledge an undertaking, a dedication." He referred to his visit to London. He went there because of a personal request from the Prime Minister of Great Britain and came back "without any message of cheer, but with a large measure of disappointment. It has been a blow to me and it has hurt me that just at the moment when we are going to stride ahead, obstructions are placed in our way, new limitations are mentioned which had not been mentioned previously and new methods of procedure were suggested." Even his enthusiasm for the vision of a sovereign republic of India would not help him overcome his bitterness. The mover's enthusiasm and bitterness were infectious and most of the members assembled wondered why they should not begin discussion of the resolution even then, but there were sober minds which could transcend the enthusiasm and bitterness of the moment and look into the dim future. Dr. Jayakar and Dr. Ambedkar counselled patience. The League was not there. The representatives of the Princes were not there. The resolution was likely to scare away most of the Princes whom the Cabinet Mission had promised to make independent rulers. There was no harm in waiting for a time. The President, Rajendra Prasad appreciated this counsel of patience and wisdom and announced that further discussion of the resolution would be postponed to the January meeting of the assembly.

The year 1946 was indeed an eventful year but when it ended, we still found ourselves groping in the dark and treading on uncertain ground.

The All-India Congress Committee met in due course to ratify the decisions of the Working Committee on the British government's statement of December 6. The resolution agreeing to the interpretation of the statement in regard to the procedure to be followed in the sections of the

constituent assembly was discussed with considerable vehemence. Though the resolution was carried by a majority, there were many who did not see eye to eye with the Working Committee. Babu Purushottamadas Tandon, the leader of the dissenting group moved an amendment but it was rejected. Sri Jayaprakash Narain and a few Socialists were severely critical of the attitude of the members of the Working Committee. Sarat Chandra Bose, the veteran Congressman of Bengal resigned in protest from the Working Committee. Those who once strained at a gnat were now willing to swallow a camel. The scales, as it were, seemed to fall from the eyes of many and the idealists found themselves reduced to a small minority.

The Muslim League was not prepared to reciprocate the friendly feelings of the Congress, and hence it asked His Majesty's government to declare that the constitutional plan formulated by the Cabinet Mission had failed because the Congress had not accepted the plan of May 16. It demanded that the constituent assembly should be forthwith dissolved. It characterised the A. I. C. C. resolution as no more than "a dishonest trick, and jugglery of words by which the Congress has again attempted to deceive the British government, the Muslim League and the public".

The Scheduled Castes Federation, disowned by its patron and having little faith in the Congress and in the Constituent Assembly decided to appeal to the U. N. O. It passed a resolution in favour of submitting to the Council of the United Nations the *case of the sufferings of the Scheduled Castes in India* against the Hindus for their acts of social, economic and political tyranny. A comprehensive memorandum was drawn up by Dr. Ambedkar and adopted by the Federation but we do not know if it was submitted and what came of it afterwards.



Despite the clamour of the Muslim League, the coldness of the British government, and the whimperings of the Scheduled Castes Federation, the Constituent Assembly resumed its session in January and adopted the Objective Resolution. Winding up the discussion, Nehru referred to those who were absent and said that no work would be held up in future whether any one came or not. There has been waiting enough. "Not only six weeks' waiting but many in this country have waited for generations too."

He made a passing reference to the representatives of the Princes also. "The idea of sovereignty enshrined in the resolution was not likely to recommend itself to certain rulers of Indian States. It was too late in the day to hug the divine right of kingship. Time has rendered the right absurd. He declared in no uncertain terms that compromise on the subject of the political aims of the people was impossible but he gave the Princes the assurance that there would be no interference in the internal affairs of their States. If the people of the States wanted monarchy, the Union Government would not stand in the way. If Ireland could be represented in the British Commonwealth there could as well be monarchies within the Indian republic. What the Indian government would aim at was uniformity of freedom in all parts of India. All we say is this, that such of them as are big enough to form unions or group themselves into small unions will be autonomous units with a very large measure of freedom to do as they choose, subject, no doubt, to certain central functions in which they will co operate with the Centre."

On January 5 Sri Rajagopalachari moved for the appointment of a Committee to define the scope of the Union Centre. In the course of his speech, he explained with his characteristic precision the cause

of the League's absence from the Constituent Assembly "It is not only a matter of culture and good breeding but statesmanship to think of other people than ourselves when we deal with any matter. This is why in proposing every action, honourable members have to deal with the intention and purpose of those who are not yet present in our assembly. We found a great many possibilities of misunderstanding and we try to anticipate these difficulties and remove possibilities of misunderstanding as far as we can.

"I should mention, therefore, that those who are absent should not misunderstand the purpose of this Committee, I am proposing. The Muslim League policy has been to secure a separate sovereign State of their own. If they had only restricted their claims to what legitimately should be asked in pursuance of their policy, they might have achieved their object and they would not have been in their present difficulty. Let me put it frankly. The greatest difficulty of the Muslim League now is that they have to join this assembly on the explicit condition that they must accept the single sovereign State ideal and that is why they find it difficult to come. That is why all this postponement why the League fixed its date always after the meetings of other political parties. That is why even after the last adjournment, the League has been unable to come and join us. Let us understand the difficulties of the other side. If the League comes in it comes on the express understanding that India will be only one sovereign State. That is why it is hesitating to come. Let us realise the difficulties and not misunderstand the delays we have to face." A fine specimen, indeed of killing with kindness.

The Indian Princes were not a little perturbed at the prospect of India's becoming a republic. With one resolution, the Constituent Assembly destroyed the tradition of ages and put the prince and the

peasant on the same level. Sir B. L. Mitter, the Dewan of Baroda, hastened to tell the frightened Princes that the resolution declaring India a republic was merely a statement of the ideals and aspirations of the Indian people and did not rule out the possibility of some units of the federation choosing a different constitution. The Princes were too conscious of the danger that threatened them to be convinced or consoled. The Constitutional Advisory Committee and the committee of Ministers met at New Delhi and passed a resolution demanding "strict adherence to the terms of the Cabinet Mission's proposals and declaring opposition to any extension of powers of the proposed Indian Union". The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes adopted a resolution on the question of Indian States' participation in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly and it was duly ratified by the rulers of Indian States in conference. The negotiating committee of the Princes and of the Constituent Assembly met in New Delhi. It gradually dawned upon the princes that their solitary refuge was not in the statement of the Cabinet Delegation but in the goodwill of the Indian people. Their innate patriotism suggested to them that their duty was to co-operate with the people of India in the framing of a constitution which would redound to the glory of every one in the country. It did not take them long to realise that their own subjects were against them. The States' Peoples' Conference denied the right of the Princes to select States Peoples' representatives for the Constituent Assembly. Most of the Princes had enough wisdom to realise that they would be rulers only if they had subjects. Instead of seeking protection in outworn theories of constitutional law and sovereignty, they wisely submitted to the inevitable. The negotiating committee of the constituent assembly was courteous enough to recognise in these Princes the vestiges of a vanishing glory and give them the consideration that greatness fallen always demands.

While these developments were going on in the constituent assembly, a crisis was brewing in another quarter. Sardar Patel publicly declared that the Congress would withdraw from the Viceroy's Cabinet ' if League members were allowed to remain under present conditions ' Congress members of the interim government have asked the British government either to require the Muslim League to share in the drafting of a constitution or to leave the cabinet. "Unless the Muslim League gets out, we will go out "

Liaquat Ali retorted "We Muslims want to live in this subcontinent as an independent and self-respecting people and are in no way interested or prepared to submit to a change of masters. We shall live our life in our own way as a nation. This can be possible only if we have a free and independent State of our own and that is Pakistan "

Sardar Patel's declaration made the Viceroy realise that the situation was grave indeed but he himself could do nothing to ease it. The Cabinet at home had to answer for the indiscretions of its representative in India. Mr. Attlee and his colleagues almost despaired of a solution of the Indian problem. They realised that their ingenuity could not cope with the ever-worsening situation in this country. The Cabinet decided that the Indian parties should be made to solve their problems. Prime Minister Attlee presented in the House of Commons on February 20 the British Government's White Paper on the constitutional future of India. "His Majesty's Government desire to hand over their responsibility to authorities established by a constitution approved by all parties in India in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plan but unfortunately there is at present no clear prospect that such a constitution and such authorities will emerge. The present state of uncertainty is fraught with danger and cannot be indefinitely prolonged. His Majesty's government wish to make it clear that it is

their definite intention to take necessary steps to effect transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948".

The White Paper was partly Britain's confession of failure to solve the Indian problem in her own way and partly an answer to the Congress that it was not Britain's business to induce the Muslim League either to get out of the interim government or to get into the constituent assembly. Britain was not going to worry any more about the quarrels and bickerings of the Indian parties. If the Congress and the League did not deem it wise to come to terms and set up a united central government, Britain would still leave India handing over her responsibility to any government or governments that existed then. In plain language, Britain would negotiate agreements with the Congress Party for the administration of the Hindu majority areas and with the Muslim League for the Muslim majority areas.

It is interesting to enquire why Britain decided to withdraw in haste from India. It was not under threat of any direct action by the Congress. The war had crippled Britain's naval strength in the area of the Indian ocean. If India became free and strong, she might become the guardian of peace in this region. For the peace of the world, it was necessary that Britain's hold over India should go. In short, it was being realised by large sections of Englishmen that the Indian empire was more a liability than an asset.

When one tries to assess the reaction produced by the British announcement, one is reminded of Prior's "Reasonable Affliction."

"A different cause" says Parson Sly,  
The same effect may give  
Poor Lubin fears that he may die,  
His wife that he may live"

The Nawab of Bhopal, the Chancellor of the Princes Chamber welcomed the statement because in his opinion it would help the States play a vital part in the building up of a happy and contented India. According to him, a contented and happy India was not necessarily a united India. The announcement really gave him glimpses of Pakistan.

The "Dawn", the organ of the Muslim League shared the satisfaction of the Nawab because Mr. Atlee and his colleagues realised at last what the Muslim League had repeatedly asserted, that the hope of framing an agreed constitution for a united India was an idle dream.

Jawaharlal Nehru commended the statement as "a wise and courageous one and hoped that the work of the constituent assembly would be carried on with great vigour and speed".

Mr. Jinnah was happy to see in the statement a real promise of Pakistan.

In this way the effect produced on the different political parties was the same, the feeling of satisfaction though the cause of the satisfaction was as different as the colour of the parties themselves. The advocates of United India and those who cried for Pakistan alike found, in the manner of poor Lubin and his wife, satisfaction in the historic statement.

The Secretary of the Communist Party was astute enough to see in the statement something which the other political parties could not see. He and his party scented danger in it and had every reason to be suspicious of it. "It is not a British pledge to quit India but an imperial manœuvre to gain time." Communist utterances, regardless of their substance, had a novelty about them which commanded attention.

While in India, the Atlee announcement gave for opposite reasons almost universal satisfaction, in England, it violently disturbed the dovecoats of imperialism. Sir Stafford Cripps did indeed ably defend government's decision to withdraw from India but all his eloquence failed to convince Mr. Churchill who bewailed in language worthy of a poet the loss of a great empire. He observed that the Prime Minister's statement was indistinguishable from the other statement made in India in 1942. "Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, leave her to anarchy"

The Prime Minister brought the debate to a close with a short speech ringing with sincerity. "Whatever differences there may be between us in this house on the matter, I am quite sure the whole House will wish god-speed to the new Viceroy in his mission. It is a mission, not as has been suggested, of betrayal, on our part, it is a mission of fulfillment."

The Working Committee of the Congress met on March 8 and passed a resolution welcoming the declaration of the British government. The Committee expressed the wish that for the smooth transfer of power, the interim government should be recognised as a Dominion government, the Viceroy should function as a constitutional head and that the Central government should be regarded as a Cabinet government with full authority and responsibility.

The Working Committee should have known that there was very little chance of its hopes being fulfilled. There was no reason to hope that the British government or the Viceroy would at this stage compel the League members to suppress their individuality and lose themselves in a Congress dominated cabinet. That the Committee was fully conscious of the utter futility of its hopes is clear from that part of the resolution which dealt with the constituent assembly. "It

has been made clear that the constitution framed by the constituent assembly will apply only to those areas which accept it. It must also be understood that any province or part of a province which accepts the constitution and desires to join the Union cannot be prevented from doing so. Thus, there must be no compulsion either way and the people will themselves decide their future." This part of the resolution amounted to a candid admission on the part of the Working Committee of the utter impossibility of one central government for the whole of India. For the first time, Congress succumbed to the inexorable realities of the situation. If the Congress could not prevent the birth of Pakistan it could beat Mr Jinnah with his own stick. That the Committee was conscious of the inevitability of the division of India is clear from what it said about the necessity for the division of the Punjab into two provinces—the predominantly Muslim part and the predominantly-non-Muslim part. The vision of a united India was growing thinner and thinner, was fading away.

The Muslim League evolved a new technique, the aim of which was to drive away the Congress and coalition ministries in the North-West Frontier, the Punjab, and Assam and instal themselves in their places. They had perfected the technique of direct action. Mr Atee's February statement furnished the League a timely stimulus to pursue the direction with a desperation that transformed men into brutes. As the State Paper had suggested that in June 1948 the British government would transfer power to provincial governments, the League could not rest idle. If it was possible to instal League ministries in the Punjab, North West Frontier and Assam before June 1948 Pakistan would take shape as a matter of course. The League raised the cry in all the three provinces that civil liberty was in danger and challenged the might of the ministries there.



Malik Khizr Hyat Khan, Chief Minister of the Punjab had not the nerve to take up the challenge. The police would either not do its duty or was prevented from doing it by the Governor who did not conceal his sympathy for the Muslim League. The League campaign here was but the repetition of Noakhali and Hindus and Sikhs were slaughtered in thousands. The Chief Minister found that he was neither chief nor minister, took counsel with his Muslim colleagues, and gave in the resignation of his ministry. The Hindu and Sikh Ministers who had been propping up the ministry had the painful feeling that they were being poorly let down. In spite of Governor Jenkin's sympathy, the League could not succeed in enforcing a communal dictatorship in the Punjab. As the League could not form the ministry, and take over the government, the province came under Section 93. The only effect of the agitation was to make the Hindus and the Sikhs realise the wisdom of the partition of the Punjab. The stoutest champions of undivided Punjab were transformed by cruel circumstance into the wildest clamourers for a divided Punjab. It did not take the League long to repent its folly but repentance came too late. The League over-reached itself and lost what would have been a fair slice of Pakistan.

In the North-West Frontier, a similar campaign was carried on for a long time. Here too, the Governor was on the side of the agitators but the Chief Minister, Khan Sahib refused to be brow-beaten. The campaign gradually fizzled out. In Assam, Congress Chief Minister Bardoloi prohibited tendentious speeches and writings of Muslim leaders whose plan was to make Assam also a Muslim majority province by immigration of Muslims from Bengal. When the Leaguers found that they could not play their nefarious game with impunity, they turned defenders of civil liberty. As in the North west Frontier, here too the League campaign proved a dismal failure.

Wavell's departure from India as Viceroy and Governor-General was an event of great importance in the freedom movement of this country. It marked the close of one long era of intrigue and inaction. It was widely felt in India and also in England that instead of facilitating the constitutional advance of India, Wavell was actually acting as a clog to progress. To some extent, he was responsible for undermining the prestige and usefulness of the interim government. His sympathy for the Muslim League, though not openly avowed, was evident in his unseemly haste to bring its representatives into the interim government. The Labour government realised that at this fateful hour in the history of India, the place of Viceroy and Governor General should be filled by one who was free from political prejudice and who would carry out the instructions of the government without mental reservations. On the eve of his departure from this country, Lord Wavell said in a message to the people, "You have dangerous and difficult days ahead. But you will overcome them. I am conscious of mistakes I have made in these years but I hope you will know that I have always tried to work for the welfare of India's inhabitants and for the advancement of India to self-rule".

It is uncharitable to question a man's intentions of which we know nothing. Wavell might have had very good intentions but his action and inaction alike had the one effect of complicating the political situation in the country and of creating dangers and difficulties which could have been avoided.

On March 23, Lord Mountbatten was sworn in as Viceroy and Governor-General of India. From the moment of his landing, he took up in earnest the task he had been entrusted with. He invited Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah for talks in Delhi. He invited the Governors of provinces for a conference to be held in April. He went on reminding Indian

leaders of the need for reaching a solution within the next few months. It seemed that he was the man whom Destiny had appointed to bring peace and freedom to a great country.

## FREEDOM COMES

When we knew that we could not have what we liked, we began liking what we knew we could have. We meekly succumbed to inexorable circumstance. The Congress reconciled itself to the division of India when it realised that one undivided India and one government would ever remain a dream. We learnt to make a virtue of necessity, we learnt that in politics as in life, sentiment is more powerful than theories.

Perhaps it had dawned upon the political parties that the vision of a united, undivided India was nothing more than a vision to be conjured up in solitude. The Congress began thinking in terms of the division of India, division of certain provinces. The constituent assembly continued functioning but the Princes were still hesitant. The Chancellor of the Princes' Chamber still clung to his faith that the Indian States would be able to come out of the prevailing political confusion as sovereign States and hence he applied the brake to the natural inclination of those Princes who wanted to identify themselves with the constituent assembly. As paramountcy would not revert to the successor government or governments, the States as sovereign independent entities would be in a position to strike their bargain. He did not approve of the impatience of some of his brother princes to lose themselves in the crowd.

The Sikh leaders and legislators met in Lahore and unanimously and vociferously demanded the division of the Punjab. Eleven Bengal representatives in the central assembly approached the Viceroy with a memorandum in which they asked for the immediate

constitution of a separate province in north and west Bengal; Hindu Bengal paid the highest price and stood disillusioned. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the leaders of parties to sit round a table and take a final decision about the fate of India but no one came forward to sit round the table because every one had come to the conclusion that division was inevitable.

Pakistan was surely coming and Mr. Jinnah was happy but his happiness was tinged with a certain anxiety. He was to get his pound of flesh but nothing more than what was warranted by the bond. He feared that the Congress had still some clever plan to outwit him at the very close of the game. He did not relish the talk of the division of Bengal and the Punjab. He did not like Congressmen using the language of the League and adopting its theories. When he found that the Congress was earnest in imitating him, instead of being flattered, he got frightened and denounced its move as one actuated by spite, malice and bitterness.

Mr. Jinnah declared in New Delhi: "The question of the division of India as proposed by the Muslim League is based on the fundamental fact that there are two different nations, Hindus and Muslims and the underlying principle is that we want a national home and a national State in our homelands which are predominantly Muslim and comprise of the units of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam. It is a mistake to compare the basic principle of the demand for Pakistan and the demand for cutting up the provinces throughout India into fragments. I do hope the Viceroy and His Majesty's government will not fall into the trap and commit a grave error. The Congress propaganda is intended to disrupt and put obstacles, obstructions and difficulties in the way of an amicable solution. It is quite obvious that they have put up the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal and the

Sikhs in the Punjab and the Congress press is inciting the Sikhs and misleading them.

Mr. Jinnah was evidently wrong. If the Congress ever misled any one, it was but itself. "The 'United India Ship' had foundered, and the Congress was now busy salvaging. The obstacles in the way of Pakistan of Mr. Jinnah's own conception were placed by the Cabinet Mission itself in its declaration of May 16". The setting up of a sovereign State of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal problem (minority) nor can we see any justification for including in a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and of Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally in our view be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan."

The Congress would agree to divide India but the Congress would do it with a vengeance. Mr. Jinnah could endure his own despair but not another's hope.

The Congress could now ignore the Muslim League but it could not ignore the Indian States. The representatives of the States were not present in the constituent assembly. The Princes were appealed to and given assurance that their autonomy would be respected but there was no tangible response. The Nawab of Bopal had his eye on Pakistan and to gain time, he managed to get resolutions of doubtful value passed by the Princes' Chamber. The princes met in conference in Bombay and passed a resolution ratifying the agreement reached by the Negotiating Committee of the Constituent Assembly and their own. The resolution gave individual rulers freedom to enter the Constituent Assembly, "at any time judged appropriate by the States concerned". This

indeed was an interesting resolution which resolved nothing. The Nawab did not want the Princes to get into the Constituent Assembly and at the same time he did not want *his motives to be peered into*. The Chancellor did not believe in doing things in a hurry. Some of the Princes wished to wait and watch developments; the others who wanted to co-operate with British India were worried over the fruits of that co-operation. The new Viceroy and his ways should be known and the final picture was only shaping itself. Those who cherished their independence were indeed justified in being wary.

The hesitation of the Princes was, however, short-lived. When the Constituent Assembly met on April 20, the President gave the representatives of a few States a warm welcome. They came from Jaipur, Jodpur, Udaipur, Bikaner, Baroda, Rewa, and from far off Cochin. Their very presence thrilled the House and the words they spoke were like *manna for starved souls*. It was an event of supreme importance in so far as it suggested the coming together of those who had been kept apart for more than two centuries. Sir B. L. Mitter, Dewan of Baroda who had a large share in shaping the event addressed the House in words vibrant with a disarming sincerity. "We wish to share in the freedom of India. We, therefore, want to share the responsibility of framing the constitution..... We want to march along with you but the pace has to be regulated without impeding the forward movement. We do not believe in isolated, independent existence which can only weaken the Union. We have come in a spirit of whole-hearted co-operation and not in a spirit of securing special privileges at the cost of the Union." Sardar Panikkar, and Sri V. T. Krishnamachari and Sri. Panampilli Govinda Menon addressed the House in such a way as to make every one assured of the increasing co-operation of the States. These seven Indian States set the example and before long thirty

five more States sent their representatives to the Constituent Assembly which thus grew in size and importance and set about its work with joy and confidence

While partition was the word on every one's lips, some noted Bengalis both League and Congress began talking about a united, independent Bengal. Sarat Chandra Bose who resigned in protest against the decision of the Working Committee allowing partition of Bengal and the Punjab was the leader of this group. His panacea for all national ills was the establishment of socialism, a much vaunted sovereign remedy the virtues of which had nowhere been finally proved. Unfortunately for him, the authorities of the Congress had passed the stage when 'isms' had any fascination for them. They had learned from bitter experience that new 'isms' and old theories did not work in a world run mad with anger and hatred. When men agreed to differ, to quarrel and even to kill one another, there was no meaning in preaching the gospel of unity. For years the Congress had laboured to make out that the difference between the Hindus and the Muslims was superficial and was the result of the machinations of a third party, but the tragedies of Noakhali, Bihar and Ludhiana brought home to them that there was between the two communities an inherent and natural incompatibility. Sri Sarat Chandra Bose still clung to his illusion and organised the anti-Pakistan front. Both Mr. Suhrawardy and Bose approached Mahatma Gandhi for his approval of their plan but Gandhi in one of his post-prayer speeches referred to this move for a united sovereign Bengal and said that he would never be guilty of supporting anything which could not be publicly and honestly defended. Why Sarat Chandra Bose took upon himself a task which on the very face of it was beyond him passes our understanding.

Lord Mountbatten went about his work in dead



earnest. He interviewed Gandhiji and Jinnah separately as many as six times and also other leaders of importance. He did not grope for his way as the Indian leaders had already cleared a path for him. They had confessed their helplessness to arrive at any kind of agreement and surrendered to him the initiative which originally rested with them. He had by the end of April arrived at definite conclusions. It was widely believed that the division of India and certain provinces was inevitable, and certain newspapers published a skeleton of the plan of partition which caused a flurry in League circles and startled Mr Jinnah.

Mahatma Gandhi still hoped that Mr Jinnah would relent and India's unity could be maintained. He took the initiative for an interview with Mr Jinnah. He was with him for three long hours, and had great argument about and against Pakistan but he came out by the same door as by the one he had gone in. Both of them were leaders but with a difference.

“Two men look out through the same bars,  
One sees the mud, and one the stars”

Mr Jinnah had reason to fear that the moment of his triumph would also be the moment of his humiliation. Big slices of his “home-land” were to be snatched away by the Hindu Congress. Perhaps he realised that the race was not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. He would have his Pakistan, but the principle of self determination would be pressed into service by the Congress as well. Mr Jinnah was thus pinned to his own principle and the spacious Pakistan of his dreams dwindled into “a truncated moth eaten” Pakistan.

Perhaps his memory might have wandered back to the year 1944 when some one placed before him his “Basis of Settlement”

Early in May, the Viceroy left for London. He returned at the end of the month with proposals for the transfer of power and responsibility to Indian hands. He invited seven Indian leaders representing the Congress, the League, and the Sikh community, to meet him on June 1. At the meeting, he gave them a full account of his discussions both in India and in England which induced His Majesty's government to formulate their proposals for the transfer of power to Indian hands. The seven Indian leaders retired for the day, gave the proposals the deep consideration they deserved, and the next day announced their willingness to accept them.

The Viceroy had a separate meeting with the Chancellor of the Princes' Chamber, and with members of the States Negotiating Committee.

The same day, June 6, the Viceroy gave the people of India in a broadcast a vivid account of the Plan and how it was evolved.

"Since my arrival in India at the end of March, I have spent almost every day in consultation with as many of the leaders and representatives of as many communities and interests as possible. I wish to say how grateful I am for all the information and helpful advice they have given me."

"Nothing I have heard or seen in the past few weeks has shaken my firm opinion that, with a reasonable measure of goodwill between the communities, a unified India would be the best solution of the problem."

"For more than a hundred years, four hundred millions of you have lived together and this country has been administered as a single country. This has resulted in unified communications, defence, postal services, and currency, and absence of tariff and

customs barriers, and the basis for an integrated political economy. My great hope was that communal differences would not destroy all this”.

“My first course in all my discussions was, therefore, to urge the political leaders to accept unreservedly the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16, 1946. In my opinion, that plan provides the best argument that can be devised to meet the interests of all communities of India. To my great regret, it has been impossible to obtain agreement either on the Cabinet Mission Plan, or on any other plan that would preserve the unity of India. But there has been no question of coercing any large areas in which one community has a large majority to live against their will under a government in which another community has a majority. And the only alternative to coercion is partition.”

“But when the Muslim League demanded the partition of India, the Congress used the same arguments for demanding in that event the partition of certain provinces. To my mind, this argument is unassailable. In fact, neither side proved willing to leave a substantial area under the government of the other. I am, of course, as much opposed to partition of provinces as I am to the partition of India herself, and for the same basic reasons. For just as I feel that there is an Indian consciousness which would transcend communal differences, so I feel that there is a Punjabi and Bengali consciousness which has evoked a loyalty to their provinces. And so I felt that it was essential that the people of India would decide the question of partition.

The procedure for enabling them to decide for themselves whether they want the British to hand over power to one or two governments is set out in the statement which will be read out to you. But there are one or two points on which I would like to add a

note of explanation.

"It is necessary in order to ascertain the will of the people of the Punjab, Bengal and part of Assam to lay down boundaries between the majority Muslim areas, and the remaining areas. I want to make it clear that the ultimate boundaries will be settled by a Boundary Commission and will almost certainly not be identical with those which have been provisionally adopted":

"We have given careful consideration to the position of the Sikhs. This valiant community forms an eighth part of the population of the Punjab, but they are so distributed that any partition of the province will inevitably divide them. All of us who have the good of the Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that partition of the Punjab which they themselves desire cannot avoid splitting them to a greater or lesser extent. The exact degree of the split will be left to the boundary Commission on which body they will, of course, be represented.

"The whole plan may not be perfect but like all plans, its success will depend on the spirit of goodwill with which it is carried out. I have always felt that once it was desired in what way to transfer power, the transfer should take place at the earliest possible moment but the dilemma was that if we waited until a constitutional set-up for all-India was agreed, we should have to wait a long time, particularly, if partition was decided on. Whereas if we handed over power before the constituent assemblies had finished their work, we should leave the country without a constitution. The solution of the dilemma which I put forward is that His Majesty's government should transfer power now to one or two governments of British India, each having Dominion Status as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made. This I hope will be within the next two months. I

am glad to announce that His Majesty's Government have accepted this proposal for introduction in Parliament this session. As a result of these decisions, the special function of the India Office will no longer have to be carried out and some other machinery will be set up to conduct future relations between His Majesty's Government and India".

"I wish to emphasise that this legislation will not impose any restriction on the power of India as a whole or of the two States if there is partition, to decide their relationship to each other and to the other member States of the British Commonwealth.

*"Thus the way is open to an arrangement by which power can be transferred many months earlier than the most optimistic of us thought possible and at the same time leave it to the people of British India to decide for themselves on their future which is the declared policy of His Majesty's government.*

*"I have made no mention of the Indian States since the new decision of His Majesty's government are concerned with the transfer of power to British India.*

#### The British Government's Plan".—

Division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan and immediate measures for the partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

*No change in the interim government until partition has been effected when two separate governments will be set up with complete powers in all subjects.*

3. Each provincial legislature to vote on the issue of the partition of India.

4 The final shape of partition will be decided by the Boundary commission

5 As the implications of partition in the sphere of defence, communications and external affairs are expected to take time, there will be provision for joint working until the two constituent assemblies are in a position to come to a final decision

6 Referendum Referendum in the North West Frontier Province without any disturbance in the present ministry to decide which of the constituent assemblies they should join

7 Until the position of Bengal is clear, Sylhet district will continue as at present where there will be a referendum to decide which province it will be part of, Bengal or Assam

8 While paramountcy will lapse according to His Majesty's government's declaration of May 16, His Majesty's government will not enter into military or other agreements with Indian States and they will use their influence to persuade the States to join one or the other or the two dominions

9 The attainment of Dominion status will be without prejudice to the right of the Indian constituent assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain in the British Commonwealth of Nations"

Nehru, Jinnah and Sardar Baldev Singh accepted the proposal on behalf of the parties they represented but the Hindu Mahasabha struck a note of discord. A resolution moved by N C Chatterjee and seconded by Dr Gokul Chand Naring was passed by the Mahasabha "The cardinal principle of the Mahasabha has always been the unity and integrity of India and

under no circumstances could it be a party to the vivisection of India in any shape or form. The Committee deeply deplores the fact that the Indian National Congress, after having given solemn assurances to the Hindu electorates that it stood by the unity of India, has betrayed the country by agreeing to the partition of India without a referendum. The Committee declare that Hindus are not bound by this commitment of the Congress."

This indeed was a brave resolution which contained in itself a protest and a challenge. The Congress treated the protest lightly, and ignored the challenge.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, sulking in the shade, found as usual in the plan of the British much more than was visible to ordinary mortals : "The Mountbatten award does not give India real independence but is the culmination of a double-faced imperial policy which while making concession to the national demand to transfer power, sets in motion disruptive and reactionary forces to obstruct the realisation of real independence. The British policy of divide and rule, exploiting Hindu-Muslim differences produced an unprecedented civil war and has now culminated in the final act of partition of the country into two hostile States which they plan to control by entering into alliance with reactionary forces in the different partitioned areas. And so on, our Communist friends talked of many things as the walrus did:

"The time has come", the walrus said,  
To talk of many things.  
Of shoes, and ships, and sealing wax—  
Of cabbage and Kings,  
And why the sea is boiling hot,  
And whether pigs have wings".

Those of the Princes who had been hoping to buttress their sovereignty with British help were sorely disappointed. The British government was determined to quit India and the Princes had to stand on their own legs which they knew they could not. In the course of a Press conference, the Viceroy observed that the States could not enter separately as dominions. If any of the Princes went to him for having special treaty, economic or military with His Majesty's Government, he would transmit such requests to the proper quarters but the question had not so far arisen. "There can be no negotiation between His Majesty's government and the States. In the process of quitting power in India, we must try to approach it in as legally correct a manner as possible."

There was no room for doubt. The States should enter into some kind of political relationship with the Indian Union or enter the Constituent Assembly as units of the Federation. They could have no independent, isolated existence. One by one, the States began entering the Constituent Assembly. The resolution of the All India Congress Committee clinched the issue. "We will not recognise the independence of States in India. Further, any recognition by any foreign power will be considered an unfriendly act."

Bhopal and Indore still dreamed of independence. The Nizam in a Firman declared Hyderabad would become an independent sovereign State and would not join either of the constituent assemblies. The Dewan of Travancore announced the decision of the State to declare itself independent on August 15 and appealed to the people to stand solidly behind His Highness the Maharaja. While the Dewan was talking about the independence of the ruler Sri Pattom Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore Congress anticipated a mighty conflict in the form of



mass civil disobedience. Not mighty civil disobedience but an attack on the Dewan and his sudden exit from the State turned the course of events to the desired end.

The Nawab of Bhopal resigned the Chancellorship of the Princes' Chamber and the Maharaja of Patiala took over the duties of this exalted office. Events in the country tended to make the Chamber thinner and smaller and the Chancellor, his occupation gone, deemed it wise to wind up the show of pomp and prestige. Its place was taken by the Hindu Mahasabha which came forward as the champion of independent Princes who posed themselves as pillars of the Hindu faith.

Sir V. T. Krishnamachari and Sardar Panikkar appealed to the Princes to cast off their suspicion and co-operate with the people of British India by entering the Constituent Assembly and sharing the responsibility of framing the constitution. This appeal had its effect and before July representatives of almost all the States took their seats in the Constituent Assembly. The first stage in the unification of India was thus accomplished in peace. Hyderabad alone still kept aloof cherishing independence and caused not a little inconvenience to the authorities in Delhi but in due course, when the Nizam understood that those in Delhi were unlike the Moghul emperors, he too bowed to the inevitable.

Now we come to the end of our story. On the 14th of June the All-India Congress Committee met in New Delhi to consider and ratify the Working Committee's acceptance of the British government's statement of June 3. Two hundred and eighteen members hailing from different parts of the country were present at this historic meeting. The atmosphere was tense. One scarcely noticed the smile of

achievement, the smile of victory on the faces of men who had gathered to determine the destiny of India. On the other hand, there seemed to have descended upon them a gloom which accompanies defeat and shame. They looked like men who had gathered together for no loftier purpose than eating their words. Among them, there were some at least who refused to brook any compromise with the ideal of a united India proclaimed from a thousand platforms. They sincerely felt that the Working Committee in its eagerness to score an easy victory conveniently forgot its own much boosted ideal. It seemed that some of these thwarted idealists were men of standing in the Congress, and what was more, they were men who could speak with vigour born of conviction. If they were allowed to freely vent their emotion, they would swell the ranks of those who believed that Pakistan was a humiliation to the Congress in particular and to India in general. No less a person than Babu Purushottam Das Tandon, the veteran leader from the United Provinces had given notice of an amendment to the main official resolution. Every one knew that he was for Akhand Bharat and that he would certainly take the Working Committee to task for allowing the "rape" of this great and sacred country. The Working Committee must have had its own apprehensions about the fate of the resolution. Generally, the A. I. C. C., in spite of some brave speeches by certain 'misguided' members, did not stray from the path chalked out by the Working Committee, but the situation which had then developed was such as to make each delegate conscious of the heavy responsibility which had fallen on his shoulders. Some of them did really feel that they had to do something more than raise their hands in the democratic manner.

The members of the Working Committee were fully armed to defend their position. They had an advantage which the members of the All-India

Congress Committee had not. Some of them had seats in the government and they could speak from personal experience of certain things unknown to the delegates at large. Office had helped to open their eyes to the grim facts of Indian politics and reconciled them to the virtue of expediency and to the division of India. Besides, the Working Committee had full confidence in the sense of discipline of the majority of the delegates. To add to all this, there was the voice of Mahatmaji which had helped Congress to tide over many crises in the past.

Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant moved the draft resolution with a speech which was indeed a model of restraint and suppression. He said nothing about the partition but pointed out how the February statement was the fulfillment of the Congress demand on the British to quit India. This was indeed a great victory for the Congress and one for which it had striven long and sacrificed much.

Maulana Azad who seconded the motion was brave enough to admit that the present decision was not the right decision and to confess that the Congress had no alternative. The choice before the Congress was not which plan to accept and which to reject but whether the present state of indecision and drift should continue.

The Congress stood by the ideal of a United India but it was also committed to the principle of self-determination and was against coercing any unwilling areas to join the union. "The division of the country is only of the map of the country, and not in the hearts of the people, and I am sure, it is going to be a short-lived partition."

The Maulana's reading of the situation was obviously wrong as in 1942 and his pious hopes stood very little chance of being fulfilled as before.

Babu Purushottama Das Tandon was unsparing in his criticism of the Working Committee. "Compared to the people, and the country, the Working Committee is a small thing. Acceptance of the resolution will be abject surrender to the British and to the Muslim League. The Working Committee has failed you but you have the strength of millions behind you and you must reject the resolution... ..In support of this resolution it has been said that the Congress could not go back on its policy of non-coercion. If that was so, what would they say to the States which expressed their intention to remain independent.? There would be numerous pockets of Muslims in India who would say that they wanted to go to Pakistan. What would they say to them?" He concluded his criticism with the bitter observation that he would tolerate British Raj rather than partition.

Jagat Narain Lal who followed Sri Tandon declared that there should be no compromise so far as the unity of India was concerned. Srimathi Ram Dulari wanted the A. I. C. C. to be dissolved and new elections held on the issue of Pakistan. It seemed the speakers even questioned the authority of the Working Committee to represent the All-India organisation.

Opposition was mounting and if not checked in time, it might overwhelm the sponsors of the resolution and their supporters. Mahatma Gandhi took upon himself the delicate task of winning over the opposition or at least rendering their criticism innocuous. He plainly told the gathering that the resolution was inconsistent with the previous professions of the Congress and yet he would exhort it to accept the resolution without amending it. "The acceptance of the plan did not involve the Congress alone. There were two other parties to it, the British government and the Muslim League. If at this stage, the A. I. C. C. rejected the Working Committee's

decision what would the world think of it? The consequences of rejection would be the finding of a new set of leaders who would constitute not only the Working Committee but also take charge of the government. If the opponents of the resolution could find such a set of leaders, the A I C C could then reject the resolution if it so felt. They could not forget, at the same time, that peace in the country was very essential at this juncture." Then he proceeded to defend the members of the Working Committee. The members of the Working Committee were old and tried leaders who were responsible for all the achievements of the Congress hitherto, and in fact, they formed the backbone of the Congress, and it would be most unwise if not impossible to remove them at this juncture. Out of mistakes sometimes good emerged. Lord Ramachandra was exiled because of his father's mistake but ultimately his exile resulted in the defeat of Ravana, the evil. I admit that whatever has been accepted is not good but I am confident that good will certainly emerge from it."

Changing horses in mid-stream was bad enough and Gandhiji succeeded in diverting the thoughts of the audience from the decision of the Working Committee to what would happen if the Working Committee were compelled to resign.

Pandit Nehru spoke after Gandhiji had defended the decision of the Working Committee. "There was no question of surrender to the Muslim League. What he and his followers had agreed to was that the issue of partition should be referred to the people for a verdict. The House would remember Mr. C. Rajagopalachari's formula on the basis of which Mahatma Gandhi carried on negotiations with Mr. Jinnah. At that time, he and his colleagues were in Ahmednagar Fort. They discussed the question in prison. While they disagreed with the approach to the whole question, there was no disagreement on the formula. Coercion was not possible. Had unwilling parts been

forced to stay in the Union, no programme and planning would be possible. They must take the warning from China. Continued internal strife and turmoil would bring the progress of the nation to a standstill" He did not say what was wrong with the approach.

"The days of high-sounding resolutions were over and the Congress had to face the naked facts of life. The Congress could not afford to act in an irresponsible manner by passing high-sounding resolutions. A responsible body must not think in terms of today only, for there is a tomorrow and a day after that. It would be ridiculous to suggest that the British should do everything before they quit the country. The June 3, statement would not have come out had there been no agreement. It was not an imposed award. Circumstances were such that the Congress had to agree to it. It was not like one of those old decisions of the British Government which they could accept or reject. The acceptance for which he was wholly responsible did not mean that he agreed to everything in the statement but he agreed with the fundamental principles therein".

It was indeed an unpleasant surprise to the idealists and the protagonists of Akhanda Bharat when Jawaharlal Nehru came down from the clouds and planted his feet firm on solid earth. Before they could recover from their surprise, Sardar Patel told them a few plain truths which literally overwhelmed them. He told them that the choice before them was whether there should be just one division or many divisions. Their fight was not against the British. The British had no desire to stay in India, and if they wished to stay, they could do so only with India's consent. His nine months in office had completely disillusioned him of the supposed merits of the State Paper. He had seen that Muslim officials, high and low, with very few exceptions,

were all for the Muslim League. Mutual recriminations and allegations were the order of the day. It would be absurd to say, "let the British go away, first. Then all questions will be solved." He asked the House how the questions were to be solved and what would happen afterwards?"

The resolution was passed. Realism triumphed over theory. The Congress Socialists torn between twin loyalties found themselves in the unenviable plight of Buridan's ass. They moved neither to the left nor to the right.

Mr. Jinnah told the All India Muslim League Council which met at New Delhi on June 9 that he had done his 'job', and it was up to them to establish Pakistan. He knew that the occasion did not afford scope for eloquence or boastful garrulity and wisely refrained from stressing his achievements. Most of the members felt small because they had to be content with 'a truncated, moth-eaten' Pakistan and yet they tried to save face by accepting as a compromise the British Government's Plan of June 3. They too, like men of the Congress, made a virtue of necessity and passed for wise men. Maulana Hazrat Mahini, hailing from the United Provinces sprang an unpleasant surprise on the cheerless gathering when he leapt to his feet and declared that he emphatically opposed the plan, but he had the misfortune to be shouted down. Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, the Premier of Sind was happy at the strange and wonderful manner in which Pakistan, a mere dream, had become an accomplished fact, and he did not forget to congratulate Jinnah on his leadership and great achievement. Z. H. Lari, another honest Muslim tried to follow in the footsteps of his brother Mohini but no one seemed to be willing to listen to his wailing. It was left to Mohammed Ismail of Madras to pour oil on troubled waters. Even though he came from a Province which would never become part of

Pakistan, he had no hesitation in supporting the official resolution." It was apparent that the British were bent upon transferring power and that, if the Muslims rejected the new plan, they would have no alternative but to transfer power to willing hands, and they all knew what they meant. While it was true that the terms offered in the Plan were anything but attractive, he felt the Council should accept it. The resolution was adopted and duly forwarded to the Viceroy. Those who cried for the moon got the crescent which was still the moon though only a part of it.

Slogans and sutras, vicarious suffering and hortatory eloquence had their use but they did not bring us freedom. If they could we would have been free in the glorious days of 1942. We learnt that constitutionalism, even where there was no democratic constitution, was not a sign of political senility. Political results always call for political action.

The British Government's Plan of June 3, 1947 was but a revised edition of Cripps' offer, and a faithful copy of "Rajaji's Basis of Settlement" of 1944. The Cabinet Mission's Plan was an ultimatum to the protagonists both of a United India and of Pakistan. Where reason failed in 1942 and in 1944, time and circumstance triumphed in 1947. The whirligig of time brought forth its revenges. "Quit India" was turned against us. It took us seven long years to learn that sunshine cannot be made out of cucumber.

When the parties agreed to partition, the Viceroy did not allow grass to grow under his feet. Super-committees and committees were appointed for expediting the division of assets and of liabilities and of everything. The Assemblies of the Punjab and of Bengal voted for partition and the North West Frontier province which the Congress handed over



to Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan had its referendum. The Khudai Kitmagrs who wanted an independent Pathan State boycotted the referendum and the Muslim League annexed the province to Pakistan. A Boundary Commission was appointed to demarcate boundaries. August 15 was drawing near. The British government introduced a Bill in Parliament in July enabling the Dominions of Pakistan and India to come into existence. With unprecedented speed and without any division, the Bill became an Act of Parliament. Before August 15, the formalities of division were completed. On this eventful day the India of ages became divided and free.

On August 14 when the clock chimed the midnight hour, we reached our journey's end and the new India of our dreams was born. It was the hour fixed by destiny for the end of our long drawn travail. The ten years between 1937 and 1947 were indeed eventful years. We oscillated for a while between compromise and non-co-operation but found ourselves veering by force of circumstance towards concession and compromise. It is for the future historian to assess the value and wisdom of all that happened between 1937 and 1947. Things happened in a way which made us realise that our strivings and sacrifices had a tendency to go awry, that they were not the only things which counted for progress and victory. There were forces at work for which we were the least responsible and which ultimately goaded us on to constitutionalism and compromise. We found ourselves no more than mere agents of an inscrutable destiny and were wafted to freedom on the waves of chance.

“We may talk as if the thing were born  
With sense to work its mind,  
Yet it is but one mask of many worn  
By the Great Face behind”

No less a person than Jawaharlal Nehru emphasised this truth when on the historic midnight of August 14 and the first day of our freedom, he spoke to the nation words which will always thrill us and will never cease to make us humble.

“Long ago, we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. The appointed day has come, the day appointed by Destiny, and India stands forth again after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises. May the star never set, and that hope never be betrayed”.

“The stone the builders rejected became the corner-stone of the edifice of Free India.

*The lone voice prevailed.”*

## APPENDIX

The Viceroy's broadcast was followed by that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:

"It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course. For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent, united India. The proposal to allow certain parts to secede if they so will is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger view point. The united India that we have laboured for was not one of compulsion or coercion, but a free and willing association of a free people. It may be that in this way we shall realise that united India sooner than otherwise and that we shall have a stronger and more secure foundation".

"We are little men serving great causes but because the cause is great, something of that greatness falls upon us also. Mighty forces are at work in the world today and in India, and I have no doubt that we are ushering in a period of greatness for India. The India of geography, history and of tradition, the India of our minds and hearts cannot change".

Sardar Baldev Singh spoke in a voice trembling with emotion. "Till yesterday, we were preoccupied with our little selves. The plan that has been announced steers a course obviously above the conflicting claims. It is not a compromise. I prefer to call it a settlement. It does not please everybody, not the Sikh community anyway, but it is certainly something worthwhile. Let us take it at that.

Mr Jinnah exhorted his followers to examine the proposals and arrive at their own conclusions. As far as he was concerned, he found the proposals acceptable inspite of their defects. He did not forget to compliment the Viceroy.

